

Why Morton Didn't Elope.

IF YOU fit people to names, then, I am sure Patty suggests to you a plump little figure, a round face, brown eyes, and a tangle of brown curls, a nose slightly retroussée, and a mouth made for smiles and dimples. Such was Patty Comer at seventeen. She was the only daughter of a substantial farmer, who thought a woman who could read and write a miracle of erudition, and whose chief ideas of female perfection ran in the bread-making and chicken raising line.

At seventeen Patty was the belle of Cross Keys, the little cluster of farms with a village street, at the head of which stood the public-house, for which the place was named. Not a railroad ran within fifteen miles of Cross Keys, and the maidens ignored ethnogons, knew nothing whatever of monogram lockets or papiers, but tied natty knots of ribbon in the curls or braids adorning their pretty heads, wore contentedly muslins and calicoes, fitted neatly to their trim, plump figures, and entranced the hearts of the village beaux to their own entire satisfaction.

Patty took the lead in every picnic, in every party, whether for husking, quilting, sleighing, or dancing; and Patty's saucy brown eyes had made two holes, deep as wells, in George Hill's great, manly heart which holes were full to the very top of love for Patty.

Old Mr. Comer smiled upon the simple love tale; for Mr. Hill, George's father, was a "warm" man, and the Hill farm was a comfortable heritage for George's wife. Mrs. Comer, Patty's grandmother, for the violets had grown over her mother's head since she was a wee baby, shared her heart between Patty and George, and all was proving the course of true-love ran very smooth, when, presto! pass! a magical letter turned the current all awry.

The letter came from New York, the great city where Patty imagined the streets were paved with gold, and the ladies wore dresses studded with diamonds, and the letter was from a lawyer. It was addressed to Mr. Comer, and it informed him that Patty's uncle, Mr. Charles Lewis, her dead mother's brother, had died and left Patty sole heiress to fifty thousand dollars. This was sufficient for one day, but the next day another letter followed from Mrs. Clairmont Sinclair, Patty's aunt, who considered it her duty to invite her niece to the city, that she might acquire the polish and make the match her fortune now entitled her to.

Considering that this fine lady aunt and unknown uncle had never noticed Patty before, in the seventeen years of her life, Mr. Comer was inclined to refuse the invitation rather gruffly; but Patty put her round white arms round his neck, her rosy cheek against his brown, withered one, and pouted out her ripe, red lips, till she won a reluctant consent to accept her aunt's invitation.

I must confess that my heroine exhibited a very unlovely part of her nature in those few days that preceded her departure for the city. She "put on airs," as the country folks termed her sudden attempts to be dignified, refusing to do her share of the domestic duties, and appalling her grandmother by suggesting hired help indoors. She gave her rustic admirers the cold shoulder, and snubbed George Hill so unmercifully, that the young farmer, in high dudgeon, resolved to cover up the wells in his heart, and erect another feminine image over this buried fountain.

With Patty's year in New York my story has nothing to do. She came home, in answer to a rather peremptory summons from her father, and Cross Keys stood aghast, as she alighted from the stage-coach. It was a day in early spring, and the maiden's travelling dress of fawn-colored silk was made in the latest style of ruffles and flounces. There was not an inch of it untrimmed, and the plump little figure that had been full of graceful curves in the tight-fitting cotton gowns Cross Keys belles affected, looked broad and square in the profusion of ruffles. A chignon of preposterous size, surmounted by an Alpine hat, finished off the Dutch figure, and surely never mortal woman wore more bracelets, rings, watch-charms, lockets, or trinkets in general, than adorned Patty's little hands, delicate ears and plump wrists.

Weeks passed, and her father and grandmother groaned in spirit, and heartily wished Mr. Charles Lewis had left his fortune to the two children of Mrs. Clairmont Sinclair, who were, Patty declared, frantic at losing it.

The Polish the rustic damsel was to have received seemed to consist in a severe course of dress-making and the study of fashion-plates, with the literary relaxation of reading all the most silly, trashy books to be found. Of these, a goodly number accompanied her to Cross Keys, but there was not one good one in the entire collection.

Rising at noon, Miss Margaret Comer, as she now insisted upon being called, made an elaborate toilet, ate a hearty breakfast, and wasted the rest of the day in idleness.

She shuddered at the sight of the kitchen, never approached the poultry-yard with out a highly-scented handkerchief applied

to her nose, and wondered why Dame Nature insisted upon her retaining her round cheeks and plump proportions, when she sighed to be pale, delicate, and interesting.

In various hints, veiled in mysterious tones and obscure language, Cross Keys was led to believe that some prince of men, some hero far above average human nature, pined for Margaret in the far-away city; so the villagers were not entirely overwhelmed with amazement when, early in June, two gentlemen took up summer quarters at the public-house, one of whom was Clairmont Sinclair, jr., the other Wilfred Morton, his chosen friend, and the hero of Patty's dreams.

Shorn of his black mustache, deprived of his glittering studs, dressed in any garb but that of the latest metropolitan fashion, I doubt whether Mr. Morton's charms would have turned silly Patty's head. Even with these undeniable attractions, I don't think he ever reached the warm little heart buried under all her silly affectations. But he wooed her in the most romantic manner.

He sauntered with her through the shady lanes, talking in caressing undertones, and vowing eternal constancy in a voice of tenderest emotion. He pressed her plump little hands, and looked in lackadaisical glances into her brown eyes. He quoted poetry by the yard, and once he sank gracefully upon his knees, in a secluded spot, drew from his pocket a pistol about the size of a mint stick, and vowed to end his wretched existence by blowing his brains out then and there, unless she promised to be his wife.

And Patty, in the seventh heaven of delight, gave the required promise, and allowed the ponderous chignon to be twisted all to one side in his grateful embrace.

"You will be mine, beloved Margareta!" he gasped, pocketing the empty pistol.

"Yours forever," sighed Patty, as if she was singing a *bluet-doux*.

"And you will fly with me far, far away from these uncongenial bores, to a heaven of love!"

"Fly!" said Patty. "Why—why, Wilfred, we need not fly anywhere, need we?"

"But with me you will be ever safe!" and in the inspired language of impecunious lovers, the impassioned Wilfred pointed out the advantages of an elopement over a humdrum village wedding.

Patty, to do her justice, held out bravely for a while, but finally her imagination was taken captive by the dramatic powers of her lover, his picture of the reconciliation scene, and she consented to meet him at the corner of the road leading to the village at nine o'clock, where he was to have a carriage waiting to drive them to the railway station.

Then, having brought affairs to a satisfactory climax, Mr. Wilfred Morton left his lady love to make his own preparations, and Patty sped homeward, forgetting her newly-acquired languid step in her desire to select the contents of her travelling satchel. She had pleaded for a trunk, but yielded to the suggested impossibility of carrying it to the meeting-place.

But after the satchel was packed, after the fawn-colored silk travelling-dress and jaunty hat were spread out upon the bed ready for use, it was only five o'clock, and there crept into Patty's heart some uneasy memories and misgivings. She became uneasily conscious that there had been years of devoted self-sacrificing love given to her by her father and grandmother, long before her Uncle Charles made her his heiress. She remembered that George—poor, neglected George—had not waited till she had fifty thousand dollars before he laid his great honest heart at her feet. She wondered whether all the demonstrative caresses of her aunt and cousins were as sincere as her father's morning and evening kiss, of grandmother's fervent "God bless you, Patty." She began to recall various occasions in which she had surprised her city relatives mimicking some awkward gestures and ridiculing some absent party, and speculated a little uneasily as to who was the object of their sneers. But then Wilfred's vows, Wilfred's melting eyes, Wilfred's mustache, and Wilfred's glossy boots came between her mental vision and her better self, and she resolved to "follow him forever."

Tea was an uncomfortable meal. Piles of snowy biscuit and ripe red strawberries could not keep Patty from a sense of unworthiness, in spite of her gorgeous blue muslin and scarlet hair ribbons. She imagined her grandmother looked older than usual, more worn and tired, and her conscience smote her as she thought of the double work upon the aged hands that had smoothed childhood's path for her so willingly and kindly. She fancied her father looked wistfully at her finery, as if thinking of the little Patty whose cotton dress was not injured by his caress, whose clustering curls never shrank from his horny hand.

It was rather a miserable little Patty, after all, who stole out of the quiet farmhouse at eight o'clock, and sped across the fields to the corner where Wilfred and perfect bliss awaited her. But no one was there, and fearing some chance passer-by would see her, Patty climbed a fence, reading a ruffle from her silk dress, and

hid herself behind a cluster of trees whose shadows concealed her completely from any prying eyes.

She was scarcely comfortably seated upon a friendly stump, when a faint odor of tobacco made her bless her forethought. There was no sound of wheels, so it could not be Wilfred, she thought, and she listened intently as footsteps drew near. In the twilight two figures approached, and she heard the voice of her cousin say, in distinct tones:

"The little fool is not here yet."

And Wilfred did not knock him down, only replied carelessly:

"Time enough. It is only half past eight. You are sure, Sinclair, her money is paid as soon as she is married?"

"Sure! Don't you suppose I know that confounded (I am afraid that was a worse word) will by heart. It is a dead swindle that my uncle let her a penny, after our affectionate intercourse for years. But, remember I am to have five thousand dollars for introducing you, and carrying the affair through."

"All right! I'll not forget. It is time that carriage was here. By Jove! If Miss Margaret don't get her money soon, we'll have to eat crusts during the honeymoon. This elopement takes my last dollar."

"Are you sure you cautioned her about secrecy?"

"You bet! Fancy Daddy Comer inquiring about me."

"He would find out you were—"

"Well, never mind! He would scarcely trust his daughter to me. What an idiot she is with her fashionable airs and her imitation of fine ladyism. Faugh, it makes me sick to look at her. I'll train some of the affectations, I promise you."

Then they sauntered a little further down the road to look for the carriage and the expected bride. Patty watched till they turned the corner, and then sprang to her feet. In the wink of an eye she was over the fence, satchel and all, and speeding across the fields homeward.

By the time the carriage came, she was in bed, sobbing pitifully, and yet, after all, happier than she had been for a year. Six o'clock was striking by the kitchen clock, and Grandmother Comer was grinding coffee in the mill, when an apparition appeared that very nearly sent mill, coffee and all down on the well-scrubbed floor. But the apparition caught the mill in two plump white hands, and kissed grandma on both withered cheeks, further proceeding to roll up a pair of blue cotton sleeves, and plunge two plump arms into the flour barrel. Then a brisk busting of a pair of trimly-shod feet, resulted in the appearance of rolling-board and bread-pan, and a curly brown head, without any hair on it but what nature placed there bent over the biscuit making, as if light biscuit was the end and aim of human existence.

"Why, Patty!" gasped Grandmother Comer.

"That's me!" said a cheery voice. "I've been away some time, grandma, but I've come home now, rather ashamed of myself, if I must tell the truth, but—"

And then Patty came very close to her grandmother, and lifted a pair of soft, beseeching, brown eyes, "I will be a good girl, if you will forgive me all my silliness."

"Dear heart, child," said grandma, bending to kiss the pouting red lips, "I ain't got nothing to forgive. Fortunes like yours turn girl's heads always, I reckon. I think that amount of money would turn mine," with a soft little laugh, "and you have no need to make the biscuit at all, dear."

But Patty felt the need of good, wholesome work, in the indignant, humiliated heart she carried so bravely, and bustled about the kitchen under grandmamma's admiring eyes, as if the past year was all a dream. Her father made a feeble little protest, as her grandmother had done; but his eyes fairly danced as Patty sprang into his arms, without a furbelow to crush or a ruffle to tear.

Wilfred Morton received, by the hand of a farm-boy, a little note that deprived Cross Keys of the illumination of his mustache forever. It was very short, only—

"I was at the corner before you came, and heard your conversation with my cousin. PATTY."

The rustics were rather shy of Patty, for some time, after her fine-lady condescensions to them, but in the fall they forgave the past and danced gaily at the wedding of Mrs. George Hill, who, before she gave away her hand, opened her heart to her farmer lover, and confessed to him the story of her intended elopement.

A vegetable gardener called at a newspaper office the other day and inquired very anxiously if the editor had seen anything in the papers lately about a grub-worm that was doing much damage to celery. "I intended," said he, "to have raised a good deal of celery this year, but I don't think it will pay if that celery grub that started at Washington a while since, about what I've been so-much on, is coming this way." A light dawned upon the editor's mind—the "Salary Grab."

Sentenced to be Skinned.

A Russian Anecdote.

THE following anecdote, taken from the Historical Memories of Segur, gives a lively picture of the spirit which reigned in the Russian Court, under the sway of the celebrated Catherine the Second:

A rich banker, named Sanderland, enjoyed for a long time the favor of the Empress, but one day he suddenly saw his house surrounded by an armed force, led by a Commissary of the police, who demanded to speak with him.

"My dear sir," said he to the frightened banker, "it grieves me deeply to have received orders from our gracious sovereign to execute towards you a severity beyond anything I have ever yet seen. I know not what extraordinary offence you have committed to excite such extremity of anger in Her Majesty as to induce her to command a punishment so horrible and unprecedented."

"I do not understand a word of what you are saying," answered the astonished banker. "I am as much amazed as if you had fallen from the clouds. What are the orders you have received?"

"I have not courage to tell you. And yet I shall be compelled to execute them."

"Am I indeed, so unfortunate as to have lost her Majesty's confidence?"

"Ah! if that were all, sir, you would not see me so disconsolate. You might regain her confidence and even her favor—but—"

"But am I then banished from Russia?"

"That would indeed be a sad misfortune; yet with your riches you could find a hospitable reception in any other country. But—"

"Oh heavens! is it possible that I am to be exiled to Siberia?"

"Even from there, you might, sooner or later be called to Russia."

"Perhaps, then, you are going to put me in prison?"

"I wish it were so, for then you might be liberated."

"Am I then condemned to undergo the knout?"

"The knout is a dreadful punishment, to be sure, but is not always fatal."

"Then, oh! then, you lead me to death! tell me plainly; this suspense is worse than death itself."

"Know, then, that your most gracious Empress has given absolute orders to take off your entire skin."

"To take off my skin!" exclaimed Sanderland, seized with horror—"to flay me alive!" But regaining his self-command, he added, "No, no—it cannot be; either you have lost your senses, Mr. Commissary, or your most benign mistress has lost hers. Is it possible you made no answer when you received such cruel orders?"

"I did more than any other would have dared to do. I did not conceal my grief and surprise. I lingered in the Imperial presence, and had actually begun a humble remonstrance to Her Majesty, when our gracious sovereign, turning to look on me, with a look and voice of anger, bade me begone and perform her will. I still seem to hear her threatening and appalling words: "Go," said Her Majesty, "and never forget that it is your indispensable duty to execute without questioning the commands I think you worthy to receive from me."

It is impossible to describe the agitation, the anguish, or the despair of poor Sanderland. After he had for a time given vent to the violence of his distress, the Commissary told him that he was allowed a quarter of an hour to settle his affairs. In vain the banker prayed for a longer interval, or at least for an opportunity to write to the Empress and implore her clemency. At length, although trembling for the consequences to his own life, he consented, and he immediately followed the letter himself; but not having courage to present himself at Court, he went to seek his friend and protector, Col. Bruce.

The Count thought that the Commissary must have made a mistake, and took him immediately to the Imperial Palace. There leaving him in an ante-chamber, he obtained admission to the presence of the Empress, to whom he related the whole affair.

What was his astonishment to overhear the Empress exclaim: "Just heaven! what atrocity! There can be no doubt that Neicoff (the Commissary) is mad! Quick! Count, take horse before it is too late, and deliver my poor banker from his alarm; and assure him of my favor and good wishes."

The Count hastened to communicate this order to the Commissary, and was yet more astonished when, returning to the presence of the Empress he heard her exclaim, "mid bursts of the loudest laughter: "Now I understand the cause of this strange and incomprehensible scene. I have for several years had a fine dog, which I valued highly, and had given him the name of Sanderland, both for the sake of a joke on my good banker, and also in compliment to the English gentleman of that name from whom I obtained the dog.—Early this morning I gave orders to Neicoff to take off his skin entire, in order to have it stuffed, as the poor thing was dead. He seemed to hesitate, and I was very angry, because I thought it was pride on his part that caused him to hesitate."

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J. W. & H. KOUGH,
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