

Select Tale.

HOW I CAME TO BE MARRIED.

I promised William Hepburne to tell him how I came to be married, and as it was rather an odd way, perhaps it will amuse the public; so here goes! My name is Thomas Petition Stevens; I was born and bred in Connecticut, taught my letters, and the "three Rs, Reading, Riting, and Rithmatic" in a district school house; learned Latin Greek, and Algebra of old Parson Field; and grew tobacco enough on my father's farm, before I was twenty to help me squeeze through the college course at old Yale.

There I found myself one commencement day, having delivered the third oration to a blooming audience in the galleries, and a grim crowd below, the happy possessor of a sheep skin, a blue ribbon, a wooden spoon, two dollars and fifty-six cents, and two suits of clothes, one very shabby, and one pie-new. 'The world was all before me where to choose,' as it says in the primer; and I decide to go up into Colebrook, and see if my maternal uncle Seth Downens, wanted a man to help get in rowan. I paid two dollars and fifty cents to get there, and landed on the door step with nothing but my own personal attractions to recommend me. However, Uncle Downens was glad to see me as if I had six dollars instead of six cents in my left hand waistcoat pocket, and hired me for the late haying on the spot, and I set up a singing school in the red school house the next Saturday night. When the haying was over, I staid a few weeks to see what I could turn my hand to, and Uncle Downens being on the school committee, through his influence I was made principal of Colebrook Academy when the winter term began, and having a very pretty set of girls to teach, I made myself and my services so acceptable to parents and guardians, that I hold the place to this day, three years from then.

One day last spring, I sat on the stoop of Uncle Downens's house, thinking of nothing in a very resolute way, with discursive seasons of listening to a brown thrush that was hid in some neighboring tree, thence giving out all manner of comic illustrations of every other bird's musical powers; hitting off, with gay sarcasm, the robin, oriole, and whippoorwill; even giving the faint peep of a dew wet chick lost in the grass, the warning cry of a hawk, or the love lorn thrill of a song-sparrow, with here and there a pewit, a blackbird, or the liquid frolic of a bobolink's song, mimicked, exaggerated and interspersed with its own delirious warble, full of spring and its sweet exultation. I was lapsing out of the thrush's concert into nothingness again, when a quick little patter, like a hail storm coming down stairs woke me up, and at my elbow stood the lithe shape of Lizzy Downens, my special cousin, and a peculiar little bit of womanhood as one might see in a life-time. 'Get up Tom!' quoth the green sun-bonnet. 'I want you to take a walk with me.' I was rather in a quietist state just then, but who ever thought of resisting that clear voice, with such a decisive tone and flawless ring?

'Where are you going, Lizzy?' said I, after we had traveled silently, like people in fairy stories, half through Uncle Downens's farm. 'Oh!' said she, recollecting herself, or rather me, 'I'm going to Asa Burt's lot, after some columbine plants, and you may carry the basket.' 'Gracious princess!' retorted I, 'accept my devoirs, and put your foot upon my neck, if it pleases you.' 'It doesn't!' said the princess; 'I only want you to behave like a man, and not wait next time for a lady's request, before you offer help. At this I whistled slightly, and rubbed my hands; Lizzy had a way of speaking truth that was—well!—plain! but she knew it, and turned her rosy face round to me with the divinest smile of intelligence and sweetness. 'Don't mind it Tom, it is all for your good, and you can't get angry with me, you know.' Of course I couldn't, such a face as that was talismanic; besides she was my cousin; and it is a singular fact in the natural history of man, that though there are no people on earth one gets so entirely and utterly disgusted and out of temper with as disagreeable and intrusive cousins; it is yet quite out of the nature of things to be disturbed by a young, pretty, smiling cousin, however saucy. It demonstrates most convincingly the old Scotch proverb. 'Bluid's thicker than water.' All the affinities of ancestry, all the tender associations of childhood, all the nameless sympathies that are only existent between relatives, spring up to harmonize cousins; and other blood beats more warmly toward its severed tide in the pulse of a relation—except, as I said before, the disagreeable ones. So I not only refrained from getting vexed at Lizzy's reproach, but submitted with a sweet humility, and would have kissed the rod, had it been required.

'Do you hear that thrush, Tom?' broke in the lady, upon my meditation. 'Yes, ma'am I have been listening to it this hour, from the east stoop.' 'What a lazy creature you are! spending a whole hour in mortal idleness, this lovely day.' 'Not a bit of it, Mademoiselle; my meditations in that stoop were of most

useful character; nothing less than a skillful analysis (mental, of course,) of the vibratory power of air, and its probable capabilities in mechanics.' 'Oh! Tom, Tom! can't you let schoolmastering alone, on Saturdays? and such a celestial Saturday as this; look there, if you want a better meditation than your analysis.'

I did look up through the dim, gray branches of the wood cypresses, skirting, and there, on the leafless bough of a tall bicory tree, sat two wild pigeons, eying us with soft shy glances, stooping their graceful shining necks, and drawing them up again with a native pride, not unlike that of my companion, though I acquit her of being anything dove-like! A few steps on the dead leaves startled the pretty creatures from their perch, the dull blue plumes shot suddenly into white, and black and gray, and slowly they lit, some few rods off, on a fir tree, while we went on our way.

'Do you know, Tom,' said Lizzy, I have a theory about birds, and people, I think every one is like some bird. Could you guess, now who a wood pigeon always makes me think of?' 'I know who has that same way of drawing up her head, Miss Lizzy; no other than your fair self.' 'Nonsense! I am no more like that pigeon than I am like a turkey; nor as much, for I can gobble imitatively, to the intense rage of all the turkeys in our barnyard! No indeed, I am much more like an oriole; look at that one, how it dashes aslant the elm boughs, and makes a descent into the hollow below, like a fluke of fire; that's the way I drop into our stupid sewing societies here, and make the old ladies' hair stand on end with my absurdities. No! if you do not recognize our Colebrook wood-pigeon, I shall not help you.' Then I shall never know, rejoined I, in a tone of mock lamentation. 'Oh! yes, you'll discover for yourself, some time,' laughed Lizzy, quietly climbing a fence between the home-farm and Asa's lot. 'Why, Lizzy, you are too quick! I was just offering to help you, and you are over.' 'I never will have any help, sir, over a fence; what is the use of being a country girl, if you cannot cross a fence without help?' 'Not much, indeed!' in this New England, where every acre field is fenced; but Lizzy, look! here are columbines enough for you.'

As I spoke, we had reached the centre of the little meadow through which crept a slow, bright stream, keeping the grass about it greener than the sea, and set thick with blue violets and golden cowslips; while on the drier banks of moss and turf that skirted the marshy border of the brook, hundreds of sunny aders' tongues flaunted their yellow turbans, all dropped with garnet in the spring winds, and still further back, among budded lapines and sweet fern, myriads of aemones, fair and frail, bent languidly to the warm breath of the south, seeming just ready, so aerial were their shapes to take flight from their rest upon earth. On the inner edge of the meadow a great gray rock abutted from the hill side right on to the greensward; about its base clustered a quaint crowd of brown flowered trilliums, and the delicate straw-bells of May—while on its ledges, from every crack and shelf were a grain of earth could harbor, sprung innumerable columbines of the brightest scarlet and gold, swaying, and dancing, and tossing their jeweled heads like veritable fairy princesses, so full of laughter and delight, that you waited involuntarily to hear the gay peal of musical mirth from their tiny bells, and fancied on each new sigh of the fragrant air, a far off echo from their tinkling in some distant field. Here my task began, and in a few minutes Lizzy's basket was filled to the brim with roots, and her hands with the blossoms—fit representatives of her gay brilliant, graceful self, as she stood poised on a ledge of the rock—her sun-bonnet hanging by one string, her face burning with the warm flush of youth and health, her blue eyes glowing deeply in the sun-light, and her soft chestnut hair coiling in lustrous rings about her throat, lifted by the light win I, and melted to living gold wherever a sunbeam kissed it.

I know I stood there with mouth and eyes wide open, like the sun-struck fool I was, 'glowering' at Lizzy, who must have had some idea of my condition, for suddenly she began to descend the rock with free, firm steps, like a chamois (at least, I suppose so, vide Buffon) and I remembered afterward, as one does remember things seen and not perceived, that there was a furtive smile glittering in the corners of her eyes. As for me, I was altogether in a maze, for the idea had suddenly taken possession of me that I was in love, actually in good earnest, in love with my cousin Lizzy! Everything I had the presence of mind to recollect, favored that idea. 'Did I not obey her like a bond-slave? was I not always so lonely at Uncle Downens's when she went away?—I admired her beauty more than that of any other woman.' I admired her mind in its active, earnest, and noble development.

Her character had faults, to be sure, a need of some small female virtues; but love would teach her those.—Ah? did she love me?—'Tom are you asleep?' pealed from the lips of which I had been dreaming. 'N—o, Lizzy, I was thinking.' 'Come a few steps further, then, and I will find you a better place to think, for

if you had eyes to see, there is a hornet's nest visible about a foot from his head, in that maple sapling, and you are in what the newspapers call a precarious situation.' 'So Tom!' thought I to myself, adding aloud, 'I am bound to follow you, mademoiselle; only lead me.'

A brief walk over the green field brought us to its upper corner, where the brook leaped and chattered over a stony bed, before it sung itself to sleep in the silent channel below. Over this little nook stood two great apple-trees, rosy with bloom, filling the air with their delicate and peculiar odor, and all murmurous with honey-bees, whose loving laboring only lightened the cool silence of the shadow and the perfume; while the little brook's laugh toned itself to a bobolink's voice, that echoed its mad mirth back agrin from the nearest fence post. 'Sit down,' said my liege lady, 'it is too pleasant not to be enjoyed, on a fir tree, while we went on our way.'

I seated myself on the turf, still in a dream, while Lizzy bathed her hands and face in the cool water, and anchored her flowers to a stone on the edge of the stream to keep them from fading. She came back to me looking as fresh and lovely as the spray of pink apple-blossoms she held in her hand, and, seating herself beside me, began to talk about them. Her entirely unembarrassed air gave me a sort of shiver, but I listened. 'Aren't these blossoms very pretty, Tom? There is something especially fascinating to me about 'apple-blows,' as Uncle Asa calls them; they are so refined, so gracious, so home-like; withal softly and warmly tinted, and of such delicate scent, a little bitterness about it, just enough to make it piquant, not insipid; a sort of common sense, do you understand? And then they are so full of promise for future winter firesides; I have a vision of a whole cider-barrel and ten apple-pies in the very cluster I hold! but really I am serious about their beauty and expression. my flowers will do well to mate the wild pigeons won't they?'

As she spoke an oriole flashed across the meadow, and her own comparison for herself made a like flash across my thoughts; how beautiful, how piquant she was! and oh! Thomas Petition Stevens, what a fool you were dyed in the grain! I lumbered on to my knees before her, I don't remember how, and without one word of warning gasped out:—'Oh Lizzy! I love you to distraction, can't you love me?'

Her face was absolutely pale with surprise, then a wild and flitting fear swept over it, I could see she thought me suddenly crazy, and the hot tears began to fill my eyes, man that I was! I suppose she saw, then, I was in earnest; for she blushed most beautifully, then bent her face down in both her little hands, and began—oh reader! pity me!—actually to laugh—laugh till the red blush spread to the very parting of her hair. 'Colored the slender throat, the small ear, and at length the white fingers. It was too much; I could not bear it; I became a man again, and something very like a thrill of anger brought me to my feet. At this Lizzy looked up, her eyes full of tears from long laughing, and her face radiant with dimpling mirth, and yet a sweet shadow of pity and surprise upon it. She held out her hand to me—how could I help taking it? or sitting quietly down beside her, very much in the state of a water-cure patient after the first douche? 'Dear Tom,' said she in a gentle, laughter-wearied voice, 'do forgive me, but really I could not help it; what does all you this morning?' 'Nothing but what I just told,' said I, in a sulky-dignified manner, that was too much for Lizzy's seriousness; a little shock of laughter shook her again, and brought out new tears, which she wiped away soberly, and clasping her hands over the handkerchief looked round at me with a grave face, through which the comic air flickered, and discomposed me: 'Tom, you are very queer; I cannot believe you really thought you were in earnest! But I was,' said I having by this time become disposed to high tragedy: 'I love you desperately, devotedly, and if you choose to laugh at the life-long misery of a fellow-being I can only hope you can never know by experience how to sympathize with such misery!' Poor Lizzy! she had to bite her scarlet lips full a minute before she could speak.—Really, Tom, I do not think you know either me or yourself, or you would not have fancied—what you seem to have. May I ask who long you—have been in this desperate state? O, the wicked little witch! that question was uttered in the simplest, gravest tone, but I felt the satire to its full extent. I grew—all-over-ish, no other phrase expresses it. 'Why—!' said I, 'I did not know it, certainly, till this morning, this long time.' 'Tom, Tom, don't be metaphysically absurd! if you must be absurd keep this side of terms. Now I can tell you something that you have been feeling unconsciously this long time, do you not only do not love me but you do love somebody else! I drew a long breath. 'Be so good as to explain!' I mean to,' replied Lizzy; 'only turn round so I can see you, for I must catechise a little; I never can harrangué without interludes for ten minutes together. First I am to prove you don't love me. You ad-

miro me, I dare say, but that is nothing, not even the first step, for you would admire a prettier picture more. When I first knew you, you did not like me, your instincts rebelled against my character, I saw it before I had known you a month; is it not so?' 'Do you think that is fair, Lizzy? I did not know you then—I could not judge.' 'That is not my answer, Tom!' 'Well, if you will have it, I confess I felt a little—afraid of you, perhaps not sure that you might not hurt me any moment.'

'That will pass, and you may answer my next question to yourself, whether those very instincts have ever ceased to keep a witness among them against me, or my nature as you see it. If I had loved you, I should have lost all these traits toward you, I should have ceased to rule, to criticise, to condemn.'

An idea struck me at that moment, and I did not look at Lizzy, but I felt her voice was not quite steady when she began again.

'If you love me, there are a thousand ways in which I should have seen and put an end to it before now. You would never have been so meek, and so easily obedient. A man who loves never loses his sense of domination; if he obeys, it is for beseeching and caresses, for love's sake, not because he recognises a stronger nature than his own; and you know I am stronger than you in several traits.'

'Amen,' said I, rather satirically. 'Now, don't be disagreeable, Tom, I am striving for your good, as Deacon Mather says when he tutors his boys. You don't love me for still another reason, that you never thought of it till this morning. Is that love? born of a spring day's idleness, the fickle caprice of sunshine and the south-wind? Nonsense! it is only an apt illustration of Dr. Watts' truism that

"Satan finds some mischief still
For little hands to do."

'Don't wince, for it is a fact. Honestly, now, did you ever think of making love to me when you had any thing else to do? I see you can't answer, and that is speech enough. Besides, if you had loved me, you never would have asked me as you did; you would have considered me before yourself, and led me carefully and tenderly toward taking the one all decisive step of a woman's life.'

I gave a long sigh, I was becoming convinced, and convinced of something Lizzy did not intend to prove. 'Do you acknowledge, Tom?'

'Yes, I suppose I must, but really Lizzy, I thought I loved you, and I'm not sure yet.'

'I hope you do love me, after a moderate fashion, but you are not in love with me, as I intend to prove to you in the second place, because you are in love with somebody else!'

'I am resigned!' said I, inwardly amused at her confident tone, and, be it acknowledged, a little terrified also; for I began, under her minute questioning, to be partly conscious of—no matter what, yet.

'Now, I expect you to be as honest as you have hitherto shown yourself, Tom, for I am going to question more closely than before. You have had dreams—all men and women have—of a home and a future; besides I know you went, not six weeks ago, to look at Deacon Mather's new house upon the hill. Yes, don't disclaim! I know it with an eye to your architectural sketches, but did not your dreams come back there? Was there not a figure dimly visible at the long window, a face turning to the gate expectantly, and a pair of neat and busy hands in the 'house wife skep'? Now, were they nobody's hands?'

'I began to feel rather restless; how came she to know what I thought?'

'Moreover, is there no lady among your acquaintances with whom you feel an entire sense of quiet, rest, and freedom; whose entrance into ever so stiff and cold a room gives it a kindly aspect, like the sudden lighting of a wood fire? No one of whom you think, when you are tired, or sad, as a comforting and soothing presence; no eyes to which you turn for sympathy in the expression of thought and always find it; no hands from which you expect to receive the thousand nameless acts of forethought and consideration that only love prompts?'

I had thought to some purpose, and was half convicted, but not fully enough to say so. 'Go on Lizzy! I like to hear you,' said I affecting an incredulous laugh.

'You are not honest,' replied my catechist, 'your laugh was in a false key; it betrays you; but I will go on. Is there not one person whom you feel a constant wish to shelter from all the hardness of life, to protect, to guard, to strengthen? whose image connects itself in some way with every aspect of the future, without whose ever recurring idea neither present nor future enter into your imagination? in whom you unconsciously hope? Moreover, is there no one whom your heart tells you, with undeniable instinct, loves you as a man should be loved—with entire devotion and pure tenderness, a patient faith and a sorrowful constancy, that you rely on without acknowledging it? Do you not trust her as you did your mother? Is she not a part of yourself, so truly, that, till some sudden light should awaken you, you could not perceive

you loved her? Are not her soft dark eyes—'

'They're not dark! they are gray.' Now Lizzy laughed indeed, and I too. The silly girl! I was quite in her power.

'My dear Tom, do you suppose I have not known this three months that you were very quietly sliding (not falling) in love with Helen Stanton? Of course I saw it, and so did half the village. As for your exploit this morning, I think I have fully accounted for that; and now, having shown you to yourself, and brought you to confession, do you forgive my laughter? I own it was all unkind, but how could I help it?'

'I don't need to forgive you, Lizzy,' said I. 'You have done me a great service. I wonder at myself.'

'Don't wonder, but act, Tom. I had no authority to say what I did about Helen's liking you, but my own observation, and I am by no means infallible. I shall not laugh if she rejects you, I assure you.'

This suggestion made me thoroughly unquiet. I could no longer repress an impertinence I had been trying to utter for the last fifteen minutes. 'We shall see,' said I assuming a miserable caricature of confidence. 'And, by the way, Lizzy, how came you to be so well read in the statistics of the tender passion, as you have shown yourself? I accompanied the question with a malicious stare at Lizzy, whose face was instantly clouded with crimson, and her hands working relentless destruction with the bough of apple-blossoms.

'Why—to be honest—I don't—oh! I meant Helen, by the wild pigeon, Tom.'

'Yes, I know you did; but I am not to be blinded by that flash of the oriole. Where did your wis-lom come from, Lizzy?'

'Oh!—you see—dear me! how silly I am! Tom, I am going to be married to George Stanton, and that is what I brought you out here to tell you, and then wasted two mortal hours telling you that you were in love with his sister! It is too absurd!'

Lizzy's words came like rockets and her face dropped in her hands, as she flushed—no—no hand, for I had taken the other, and absolutely was kissing it, I was so very glad. George Stanton was the finest fellow in the county, fully worthy of Lizzy, had just finished his theological course, and was to be installed in Colebrook next month. It was exactly the best thing, and, as soon as I found words, I told her so, adding, somewhat ruefully, 'I hardly expected to be congratulating you on this subject, two hours ago, but I am sincerely glad Lizzy.'

She looked up with a little sweet laugh, and thanked me; so, rising from the turf, we gathered up the basket and the columbines, and threaded our way homeward through the woods, silently enough.

That night I went down to Mr. Stanton's, and persuaded Helen to go to singing-school with me. I don't know if they had the class without the master, or not. I never asked; for instead of being in the red school house, Helen and I were sitting on a pine-log, by the edge of the river, in the moonlight; and after a great many devices of speech, I had at last managed to ask her the same question. I put to Lizzy in the morning, only in rather a different way, and much more unceasingly.

She, too, hid her face, but tears came dropping through the slender fingers, and she did not forbid me to take away the hands or dry the tears; but looked up at me with her clear eyes, so full of unutterable love, that they seemed to have grown blue instead of grey, and said softly, 'I wonder what I have ever done, to be made so happy! Well for me that I felt, with no slight heart-ache, what the tender humility of her speech implied, though she did not know it herself. If I could not now efface the past, I would try faithfully to make her future blessed.

We were married last autumn. First old Father Mather married George and Lizzy; then George did the same kind office for Helen and me. My wild-pigeon still keeps that name; and Lizzy and I have once in a while a little clash that Helen cannot understand.—Only yesterday, when I asked Mrs. Stanton to admire the comfortable arrangements of my new house (one of Deacon Mather's) she informed me she 'could not sympathize with the life-long misery of a fellow creature!' I had to laugh in spite of myself.

That, patient reader, is the way I came to be married.

THAT ELOPEMENT CASE NOT SO BAD AS REPORTED.—We stated on Wednesday, says the Troy Traveler, that a woman recently arrived at Chicago; from Kansas; with the dead body of her husband, which she was taking East for burial. And that on the route she fell in with a young man, and on their arrival at Chicago, they went off together, leaving the dead body of the husband in the depot. But it seems that the latter part of the statement was erroneous, for the woman forwarded the dead body on, and it arrived in this city on Saturday, and she arrived with her new husband on Monday, and the funeral of the deceased husband was held at Waterford on Tuesday last.