

Democrat and Sentinel.

THE BLESSINGS OF GOVERNMENT, LIKE THE DEWS OF HEAVEN, SHOULD BE DISTRIBUTED ALIKE, UPON THE HIGH AND THE LOW, THE RICH AND THE POOR.

NEW SERIES.

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MISTAKEN IDENTITY; OR— ADVENTURES IN THE WRONG HOUSE.

By R. Montgomery Bird.

(CONCLUDED.)

"I shall love Mrs F. as long as I live. I made the mistake the more readily, because, being beset by the police for knocking down a rascally fellow who insulted me in the street." (I did not like to tell the charmer of the rest, lest she should conceive a suspicion of me.) "I attempted to get home through by-ways and the garden gate. Susan let me in; she was waiting for that rascally Jimmy, her sweetheart, who was to pretend to conduct you to the carriage."

"Oh, no," said my mistress, "I never heard of Jimmy. Susan was to take me, and she was to be dressed in men's clothes—you know how I mistook you—what a great mistake I made!"

"Oh that it could be made over again," I said sincerely enough. And I then proceeded with the story as I have already narrated it, exposing the scheme and punishment such as it was, of Susan, and describing the illusion—the persuasion of its being my own chamber, in my own boarding house—under which I had entered her boudoir. "And now, my adored creature," said I, "if eloquence is necessary, let us start forthwith, and we can be married before the cars start. It's but stopping at the first person's or magistrate's."

"But—but," murmured my mistress, with the sweetest accents, "would you really marry me—without knowing who I am?"

"I would, I would," said I, clasping her in my arms. "I take you for better or for worse, believing—for my soul tell me it—that you are an angel."

"Oh, James!" said she, smilingly, "do you know me? I am Ellen, Cousin Ellen! Did you get Father's letter?"

Heaven! what a surprising climax to the day's adventures. Was I to get my namesake's letters, father's debts, and marry his intended wife in the bargain. No wonder if my dear creature should melt so soon, to find in me her supposed cousin and abandoned husband. But how was it she could be so deceived? Certainly she must have known her own cousin. And what was she going to do for me. These questions and various others, which came crowding into my brain, were, without my asking them, for in fact I was for awhile speechless, answered by the darling Ellen herself; who, with looks of the most confiding faithfulness, as if the matter was now quite settled, murmured—

"Aln't it strange that we would come to gether so, and that we should love, without knowing each other! But how should we, since we have never been together since we were children? And I thought you had red hair, too! How foolish! And when I thought you were only Susan disguised, and wished I had just seen a handsome looking person for a sweetheart, I said nothing but the truth; for indeed I loved you when I thought you were only Susan! And to think that I was going to run away from you. Oh! how unhappy I should of been if I had; and how happy I am that I did not!" And here my dear cousin (my cousin indeed!) threw her arms around my neck the sweetest way imaginable. I returned the caress, but expressed my astonishment by exclaiming—

"Run away from me; from your cousin!"

"Oh! you know, I thought you had red hair," said she. "And then, father—if you remember father—you know he is so old and obstinate. And then that contract—"

"Contract?" said I "what contract do you mean?"

"Why, with Uncle John, to be sure; though it was not a contract, but only a promise; for you, know ever since I was born, father and Uncle John were determined we should be married together, for some of their reasons about the property. Now, Cousin James," continued Ellen, with unabated affection, which was more agreeable because these hints of the contract, or promise with the wise reasons about the property, struck a sudden chill to my bosom as suggesting some great obstacles that might arise to my new born love—"now cousin," continued the dear girl, "because I thought you had red hair, and because they were going to marry me to you whether I would or not, I hated you—it was so foolish and wicked—but I don't hate you now. And when we started off on this jaunt to Niagara, and father told me I must be first married to you in Philadelphia, I hated you more than ever; and when father told me had written to you to meet us here to-day, and that he expected you, and if you came I should perhaps marry you to-night, I could ensure it no longer. And so I made

him; abused you like a pickpocket. Shall I choose him handsomely. Oh! a parson! a kingdom for a parson!"

And my venerable father-in-law skipped across the floor, rang the bell, squeezed my hand, kissed his daughter, rang the bell again and performed several other feats which were in their effects, of a truly legendary character; for within ten minutes, as if by a trick of magic, I who thirty minutes before was a heart free bachelor, free of the world and women, was standing in a wedding group, composed of persons all of them entire strangers, my bride, my father-in-law, the clergyman, with his book, the lady of the house, and some other persons admitted as witnesses to the ceremony, about to be married to a lady whose name I did not actually yet know. The haste, the bustle, the extraordinary transition, my hopes, my apprehensions, my ignorance, all combined to throw me into a whirl of confusion during which the ceremony was begun, and conducted very little to my edification; for I cannot say I distinguished one word until my ears were suddenly struck by the important question, "do you, James J. Smith, take this woman to be your wedded wife," etc. At that moment I was struck with the enormous absurdity of taking such a leap in the dark—of marrying a woman who for aught I could tell, might be—but, as I was going to halt, for truly that was the impulse then on me. I caught a view of the bride's face stealing to me an upturned glance, so full of goodness, purity, affection and heaven knows what other divine qualities, that fear turned to rapture, and I uttered the important "yes" with all the emphasis of resolution.

How I quickened into life now, and picked up my ears to hear my wife's name.

"Do you Ellen Brown—"

I felt as if struck by a fiery jar charge of electricity. The name confounded, without admitting me. In truth I had no time for comparing facts and making inferences, for just as the clergyman breathed the expected name of my charmer, the door flew open, and a man rushed in, hastily exclaiming—

"Hold! hold! I forbid the banns!"

Conceive the confusion of all present, at this extraordinary interruption; and conceive my surprise when, snatching Ellen into my arms, determined to sustain my rights to her against James J. Smith, the genuine, who I doubted not, was the cause of interruption—conceive my surprise, I say when, turning to this detested personage, my eyes fell not upon my red-headed namesake, but my old friend and college mate, Harry Brown, of Virginia. That he should be here! that he should come such a dangerous interruption! that he should turn against me, his old friend, and ruin me!—I gashed my teeth at him; I raised my hand in a furious menace; and if there had been a pistol in it, I certainly should have blown his brains out.

"You forbid the banns, you scoundrel!" said my father-in-law, in a rage equal to my own; "you dog you! you forbid the banns!"

He was approaching my friend intently. But Harry was looking at me. His face lighted up with wonder, followed by an air of recognition and delight; and, smothering or trying to smother, a laugh, and laying his finger significantly along his nose, he looked at me, he repeated, though in very altered accents—in fact he could scarcely speak for laughing—

"Yes, I forbid the banns—until Mrs. Brown gets up. She is on the stairs. What uncle do you expect to marry Nell off without allowing us to be witnesses? Here she is." Enter Mrs. Harry Brown, a fine looking young matron, but not fine as my Nelly. "You thought to give us the slip, by taking the morning boat, and changing your boarding house. You forgot the evening train and my skill in hunting down fugitives!"

"And you don't oppose the match then, you dog?" said my father-in-law, "and you don't know anything about cousin Jim, after all?"

"Oh, no, nothing at all! I approve of the match with all my heart and soul; and pray proceed with the ceremony as quickly as possible. You, Ellen Brown, do take this man—but I beg the reverend gentleman's pardon."

The ceremony was resumed and in two minutes I was married.

"Victoria!" cried Harry Brown, seizing my hand, and so interrupted the first nuptial embrace, with which, according to the fashion, I was saluting my bride.

"I congratulate you, cousin James J. Smith, upon having married the finest girl and richest heiress in Virginia; the very girl I had intended for you. Oh, you dog, who would have the thought you had the wit and spirit to accomplish the splendid adventure without my assistance? Know your relations. Do you see, my wife wants to kiss her unknown cousin? You kiss her and I'll kiss Nelly! Ha! ha! ha!"

And here my friend went into such explosions of laughter and rejoicing as amazed everybody except me, who began to be aware of the full extent of my good fortune.

In the midst of this joyous tumult enter another unexpected visitor. Death? it was the red-headed gentleman of the theater; the true James J. Smith, as my fears told me, and as was rendered still more evident by his first words to my father-in-law.

"Sir," said the young gentleman, grasping him affectionately by the hand, "I have I believe, the honor of speaking to my dear uncle, Thomas Brown, and of introducing to his unworthy nephew, James J. Smith."

"Bless my soul!" cried the old gentleman, and could say no more, for he was struck dumb with astonishment.

"Had the misfortune, in some unaccountable manner," continued the new comer, "to miss your last favor, promised to arrive today," and here the villain drew out some former letter, "and only heard of your being here by accident. But that, I can't be mistaken! Permit me to pay my respects to my dear cousin."

And up stepped Miss Ego, with a captivating smile and extended hand, to my astonished wife, whom he saluted as his dear cousin Ellen—Miss Brown.

"Mrs. James J. Smith, sir," said I.

"What a beauty!" added red head, with delightful sincerity.

I looked around me; friend Harry, for instance; for at this moment I confess, my heart felt me; not that I had any fear of my contemptible namesake, indeed, but I thought the effect of the demonstration upon my wife and father-in-law, both of whom appeared very much decomposed by the new turn of affairs. Harry looked as if about going into another burst of lamentation; but he held his head as if to bid me dash on, without fear.

"Mr. James J. Smith that is, sir," said I.

"This lady is my wife."

"Sir," said the gentleman, "I am James J. Smith."

"Sir," said I "so am I."

"James Jones Smith," cried red head, "this lady's cousin!"

"James John Smith," cried I, "this lady's husband!"

"Uncle!" exclaimed James Jones, with a look of horror and despair, "you have married Ellen to an imposter, and you are ruined forever."

"What an imposter!" cried Mr. Brown; "call a constable!"

"If you do," said I, "he will only arrest your nephew there, not me, as your nephew knows full well. The young man speaks the truth, at least in part. He is your nephew, and he is ruined forever; as I know as well as he: for this afternoon I was dupped upon an unpaid note of his for a debt of honor, a gambling debt of nearly two thousand dollars, and was arrested, besides, for a tailor's bill of—"

"Oh! for heavens sake!" interrupted my rival, deprecatingly.

"And," continued I, unmercifully, "it is but an hour since I heard him, in the public theater, when warned to be on the watch of the 'hawks and buzzards' who were on the watch for him, boast to his gambling friends, of his rich and comfortably handsome cousin here, the daughter of 'Old Rusty,' a hard-headed old hunk, as a resource that would enable him to 'hold up his head again with the best of them.'"

"Done for, by jingo," said Mr. James Jones Smith, and sneaked out of the room.

"On the abandoned villain," quoth my father-in-law.

"And if you want more evidence of his unworthiness," said Harry stepping to my aid, "I can give it, and you know, uncle, I warned you I had heard strange tales of him. When I came around here with Mrs. Brown, to see you, and heard you were marrying away Nelly, I thought it was to him; and that's the reason I forbade she banns."

"Ay, sir, and you contented, you added and abetted this worthy personage," said Mr. Brown, senior, giving me a look as black as midnight; "you helped, you even instigated, a rascally imposter," here

the old man gave way to rage, and Ellen began to cry, "to cheat and deceive my girl, to rob me of my daughter."

"No imposter at all," said Harry. (I would have said the same thing, but he took the words out of my mouth.) "He is a gentleman, uncle; my old friend and college mate, and the very man I wished to substitute for his namesake; the very man I intended to get about; though I never told you his name. For, in honesty, I must confess I had some thoughts, if no other turn would serve, of getting him to personate your nephew, and so cheat you into accepting a worthless son-in-law. He has rushed into the adventure on his own suggestion, (then Harry began to laugh again,) "and I vow I admit and love him the better for his spirit."

"It was a villainous deception," said Mr. Brown.

"I declare, sir," said, "it was an unpremeditated, an accidental one altogether.—An extraordinary circumstance" (and here I related it) "threw me into Ellen's boudoir, where, upon mentioning my name, (and James J. Smith—James John Smith—is my name, sir,) she herself invited me as her cousin, from whom I found her on the point of running away."

"Oh! James," said Ellen, "don't tell of me!"

"I had never seen her before; I knew not who she was; yet I fell desperately in love with her; and, to improve the opportunity, (which I must otherwise have lost) I allowed her to remain deceived. I did deceive you in appearing as your nephew; for I saw that otherwise, you would reject me. Yet you must give me the credit for disinterested motives, sir, and for a true uncalculating affection for your daughter—since I stood up to marry her without knowing even so much as her name."

"Very true indeed," said the snarling Mr. Brown, "but as you had heard your namesake talk of the rich, as well as desirable handsome daughter of the 'hard-headed Old Rusty,' (confound the jackanapes!) you must permit me to believe, you were reminded of her two recommendations together—"

"I decline," I interrupted I, "I hadn't time to think of anything but her beauty."

"But, sir," continued my father-in-law sternly, "my nephew forgot to tell you and his rascally associates know, sir, that my daughter's riches, sir, depend upon the will of her father, sir, and that she will never get a penny, sir, for marrying a man I disapprove of."

"Then, sir," said I, "I am proud to assure you that fortune has placed me far beyond the necessity of lamenting your disapproval; for, thank heaven I have enough, and more than enough to secure your daughter's happiness, if love and a handsome competency can secure it."

"Shall have it all I said 'Old Rusty,' grasping my hand warmly; for I was only trying you; and I see you are a good fellow. Confound that rascally nephew! what an outrage we have had! And it is all owing to his (this was spoken to Harry and the others) having the same name, being a better fellow, and not having red hair."

"And you ain't my cousin after all?" murmured the soft voice of Ellen in my ear.

"No my love, but—"

"But my husband. Oh, it is very funny. But I shall love you all the better. And I am so glad you deceived us; otherwise further would have never consented."

"And if he had not?"

"Then, perhaps—yes, then—if you had asked me—I should have run away with you. But let us liberate Susan and give her a scolding."

"Oh," said the lady of the house, "she or her Jimmy, has picked the lock, and they have run away together."

"Well, let her go," said Ellen, "fate has provided me a better travelling companion, and I do not care now how soon we start off to Niagara."

"Ah! the dear creature! She has not yet ceased to laugh and rejoice over the oddity of our courtship and marriage, and for me, I never recant, with a thrill of pleasure, my half-hour's Adventure in the Wrong House."

—The Irishman's opinion of Yankee enterprise was that—"Bedad, if he was cast away on a desolate island, he'd get up next morning an' go round sellin' maps to the inhabitants."

him; abused you like a pickpocket. Shall I choose him handsomely. Oh! a parson! a kingdom for a parson!"

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