

### The Bewitching Widow.

Just before dark one evening Tom Courtney came into the little office where Frank Worthington kept his dusty law books and helped himself to a chair and cigar, with a quiet make-yourself-at-home sort of coolness which showed he was no stranger to the premises.

"Well, Frank," said he, "we got through the last case to-day, and I'm ready to be off to-morrow. You promised to go home with me, you know."

"No need to remind me of it, old fellow," laughed Frank. "I've endured the horrors of a boarding-house too long not to jump at the chance of trying country life while."

"Can you be ready by morning?"

"Oh, yes; it won't take me long to pack my kit. I haven't any Saratoga trunk to fill with flounces and furbelows."

"All right, then. We shall have a cousin of my mother's to go down with us."

"The deuce we shall. Tom, if it's a girl I won't go, by George! I got enough of traveling with girls last summer."

"You will go! I'll never forgive you if you don't."

"Is the cousin of the feminine persuasion?"

"Yes; but she's not a girl. She is a sedate widow lady, who goes down to make an annual visit to us every Christmas."

"Oh! that alters the case. One of those motherly, middle-aged ladies who make a fellow look respectable, as if he was traveling with his mother."

Tom repressed an inclination to laugh, and replied soberly:

"Yes, no doubt Mrs. Cameron will appear like a mother to both of us."

"Mrs. Cameron. A good, old respectable name," repeated Frank. "Has she money, Tom?"

"Well, yes, a fair little fortune."

"And you may stand a chance in her will?"

"Possibly."

"Yes. Well, my boy, you are quite right to be attentive to your mother's elderly relations. No doubt Mrs. Cameron will be an addition to our journey."

"Decidedly," said Tom, feeling it about time for him to get out of that office, where he could indulge in the laugh he had reasons for wanting, and arising he said: "You'll meet us at the depot at 7 in the morning?"

"I will."

"Sharp 7, remember."

"Yes. As time and railroad cars wait for no man, or woman either; depend on me, Tom; just look after that elderly cousin."

"I'll do it. So good night, then."

And, as Tom went out, Frank arose and began to put his office in order and to make some preparations for his Christmas journey.

He meant to be very early, but he overslept himself, and reached the depot only five minutes before train time. He went hastily into the ladies' room, supposing that Tom would be there with Mrs. Cameron. The room, however, had but one occupant—a bright-faced lady, in a stylish black and white traveling suit, with a long white plume drooping over a coquettish black hat. She turned a pair of brown eyes upon Frank as he entered, hastily glanced around, and retreated.

"Whew! what a pretty girl! glad I don't have her to dangle after and wait on thought," thought he. "But where the dickens is Tom?"

He hunted through the crowd, and just as the train was starting, he found Tom on the platform.

"Oh, here you are. Be quick now," hailed Tom. "I thought you were about to give me the slip after all."

"No danger; I only slept late, that's all."

They went into the bar and the ponderous wheels rolled off, and, as they opened the door, Frank got a glimpse of a pretty girl with a white plumed hat inside.

"Did your cousin come?" he said to Tom.

"Yes; I'll introduce you."

Tom marched straight down the narrow aisle to that very girl's seat, and as she rose, with a bewitching smile, Tom introduced:

"Mrs. Cameron, this is my friend, Mr. Worthington. My cousin, Kate Cameron, Frank."

Poor Frank! You might have knocked him down with a knitting needle. But he was gentleman enough to stammer some response to the beautiful lady's courteous greeting, and to try to recover from his confusion as best he might.

Half an hour later he and Tom stood together on the car platform, and then his wrath found vent.

"Tom Courtney, I'll never forgive you!"

"You will. I had to deceive you so you wouldn't act like a fool and disappoint me of your visit. But Kate will neither eat you up nor fall in love with you, so you needn't be scared."

"Don't expect me to pay any attention to her."

"Hold on there! She hasn't given you the chance yet. Kate is quite a belle in city society, and awful particular in her company. Sad dogs like you and I wouldn't stand a ghost of a chance."

"I don't know that she could do better," growled Frank, with man's usual contrariness, taking the opposite track.

"She might not think so. I am going to the smoking car, Frank; come along."

"No, I don't care about smoking now."

"All right; look after Kate till I come back—that's a good fellow."

Now Frank had not the least intention of looking after Kate, but when he approached her seat she looked up with such a frank, pleasant smile, and moved her shawl from the seat opposite to make room for him with such a cordial air that he could not resist the temptation to sit down and enjoy her society.

"Not much of it did he get, however," after the first pleasant reception Mrs. Kate betook herself to her book again, and never even looked at him. By the way of revenging himself Frank looked at her, and the more he looked the prettier she grew.

"She a widow," he thought. "She is not a day over 21, it she is that; I wonder if she is Tom's sweetheart?"

And strange to say this reflection made Frank feel like grinding his teeth at she unconscious Tom, calmly enjoying his cigar in the smoking car.

The journey passed without any special incident, and without Mrs. Kate's troubling Frank in the least for any attention.

At the station they found Black Bob awaiting them, and a few minutes' drive brought them safely to the door of Tom's home. If Frank had found Kate Cameron pretty in her hat and traveling wraps, when she took them off and showed her slight form, with graceful curves and arches, he thought her bewitching. Of course he didn't care anything about her; but some way it was a relief to find a certain pretty Minnie Brown, who was one of the holiday party, unmistakably occupying the position of Tom's sweetheart, and putting Kate out of the question.

Before they had been there three days Frank began to have uncomfortable sensations under the left of his vest whenever Kate was near; and Sunday morning, when she came down dressed in a bewildering suit of blue velvet, ready for church, he quite gave up that he loved every inch of her, from the heels of her boots to the tips of her little blue gloves.

Mrs. Kate was sharp enough very speedily to see how the land lay, but she never gave one sign that she cared a straw for him, and Frank tormented himself daily with hopes and fears, after the usual fashion with lovers.

The holiday season was to close with a grand party on New Year's night, and all the young people in the neighborhood were invited to assist in the merry-making.

Late in the evening a silent figure sat by the library fire, having stolen away from the revellers below stairs to indulge in a moment of reverie. Presently the door was opened, and the faint light glittered on Kate Cameron's blue robes, as she came forward and addressed the figure in the chair:

"Why, Tom, what is the matter? Have you got a fit of the blues?"

A deep sigh was the only answer.

"Why, dear, dear, it's worse than I thought," laughed Kate. "Have you been quarreling with Minnie Brown? Tell me about it."

And with cousinly freedom she laid her hand upon his head.

The little hand was quickly impressed and carried to the lips of the silent figure; and then Kate stooped and looked into the face, not of her cousin, but of Frank Worthington.

She gave vent to a low exclamation, and would have fled, but Frank took good care to hold fast to his little white prisoner, and detain her.

"It isn't Tom, but don't go," he pleaded. "Stay with me, Mrs. Cameron—dear Kate, Tom does not love you half so well as I do."

"How do you know?" whispered Kate shyly.

"Because Tom only loves you as a cousin, and I—oh Kate, I love you better than my life!"

"But you have known me such a little while!"

"Yes, and might never have known you at all if Tom, the blessed old boy, had not deceived me, and made believe it was an old lady who was to come down with us."

"I know—Tom told me all about it," laughed Kate.

"Did he! But you will forgive me, Katy darling, because I love you so, and learn to love me a little, won't you?" pleaded Frank, boldly throwing one arm around her, and drawing her down by her side.

"I am afraid I have learned that already," she whispered frankly.

And then—but neither you nor I reader dear, have any business listening to the love secrets in the fire-lighted library, so I won't tell you what then.

But I will tell you that when the next New Year came Frank and the bewitching widow were visiting Tom's again, but she was a widow no longer. They called her Mrs. Worthington.

**DREAMS.**

"Dreams are but interludes which fancy makes, When monarch reason sleeps this mimic quakes: Confounds a medley of disjointed things— A court of cobblers and a mob of kings."

We pretend not, in these few remarks, to account for or explain these mental phenomena. Even Dryden himself, in those masterly lines of his above quoted, takes good care to eschew everything like philosophical conjecture in his description of dreams—employing, on the contrary, in his description, that very "fancy" which the poet and the dreamer alike have recourse to when ratiocination refuses to afford its aid in the solution of a problem so mysterious. That "monarch reason sleeps" uninterrupted during our hours of sleep, we hold to be a proposition altogether unsupported by evidence; every rational creature that sleeps being, in our opinion, conscious that his or her reasoning faculty (not unfrequently during the hours of sleep) exerts its legitimate vocation. It may be urged, and perhaps with some force, that, in our slumbers—especially when they are unusually sound—that "medley of disjointed things" Dryden mentions is apt to confound somewhat by the notorious "mimic" (Fancy); and it is in admirable keeping, therefore, with her character that she should, in her quaking mood, associate courts with cobblers and mobs with kings. To present this same "mimic" however, as exercising exclusive control over the mind in our hours of sleep, is to represent a state of things which every rational individual finds oneself abruptly able to contradict and refuse. The powers of ratiocination, after wholly suspended during sleep, becomes a monstrous supposition in presence of the fact that thousands of individuals (intelligent individuals) are to be met with who, could their evidence be conveniently secured, would promptly testify to the fact (in their own case) that "dreams" are not always "interludes which fancy makes." The writer's own experience, as regards this matter, is decidedly opposed to Dryden's highly poetical notion that "Monarch Reason" (who in many cases, it is true, "just does nothing all the day") is very apt "soundly to sleep the night away." On the contrary he (the writer) "many a time and oft" is apt to find his own slumbers shaken by the remonstrances of this same "Monarch Reason," whom we ever find just about as vigilant by night as by day. And, as a very popular conclusion to these remarks, the writer is prepared to add—and to state as a fact—that, in quite a number of attempts at "prose and rhyme," on his part, during sleep, the intellectual monarch has exercised far more of control than he ever did in similar attempts during the writer's waking hours. Would that we could recover the things from the "vast deep" of oblivion.

**CHRISTMAS AT SORRENTO.**

An ancient custom, religiously observed at Sorrento, decrees that on the night of the birth of Christ, a real child, living and beautiful, shall be chosen as the representative of the Divine Child our eyes are not blessed in beholding; that the faithful, like the shepherds of Bethlehem and the Eastern kings, shall come and pay him homage. \* \* \*

He was a beautiful, dark-eyed boy, about three or so, clad royally in a cloak of scarlet wool. His mother placed him, sitting, in a gilt and red-velvet chair, placed at the left of the altar, and removing the cloak, showed him in his little white shirt, bare-footed and bare-armed. A gilt basin, an ewer and a sponge were handed to the priest who took them, and kneeling before the child, washed his feet, then shod him with stockings and embroidered shoes. After this the child stood up, and a little blue frock with pink bows was put over him, and the priest placed on his head a crown of flowers. Shots were fired, and all, rising, opened the *Te Deum*. He stood all the time, his father helping him to hold his little right hand in the act of benediction. Formerly the poorest child was chosen; a nun embroidered his habit; and kept him at her cost for a year; but now the nun is dead. Beauty is the greatest recommendation; next to beauty comes poverty. \* \* \*

I. is a beautiful custom. I felt as I looked on that child, born to sorrow, sin, death—I felt that it is good to be reminded of mysteries we treat so spiritually that we forget them. Do we indeed always remember that Christ became a weak little child for us? We know it, but do we think much of it? Ay, truly I felt as I looked on, as I saw the ardent faith of this simple people—ay, truly this is the flesh of Christ; this is the real humanity to which he became wedded, which he redeemed by His blood.—*A Summer and Winter in the Two Sicilies.*

**SWINGS OVER.**—A cunning Kentucky hog chews off grape vines growing from a tree, and holding one end in the mouth, swings itself over the fence into a corn-field.

A cunning kentucky hog chews off grape vines growing from a tree, and holding one end in the mouth, swings itself over the fence into a corn-field.

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He said: "Will you excuse me sir?" and the gentleman addressed excused him. He continued: "I am not in the habit of begging." And the gentleman said he was glad to hear it, and walked off.

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