

THE STORY OF MY WEDDING RING.

The inn at Louvre was very disagreeable. The odor of garlic and cabbage and the dampness and dirt were insupportable, and so I decided to push on to Danvers. The only vehicle I could procure was a rattling two-seated gig, drawn by a bony white horse of doubtful ability; but as my destination was only three hours away, and I was not liable to meet any one on the lonely road, I started off cheerfully enough, resolved to enjoy my solitary drive to the utmost.

The moonlight, as it glided on the soft green of the hedges, and streaked the gray of the dusty road, was very beautiful, and before half a league had been passed over I heartily congratulated myself upon my good fortune in escaping the horrible inn at Louvre.

After an hour's dreamy and delightful ride I came to a cross roads where with difficulty I deciphered the battered signpost and learned I must turn to the left to reach Danvers. So, clucking up my deliberate steel, which proceeded in a half dignified, half protesting fashion, I turned into a grassy lane between two tall hedges and drove through a lonely district until the dreamy influence of night overcame me, and I drifted into a somnolent state midway between sleep and waking.

I was aroused by the sudden halting of my horse, that gave a frightened snort and planted both front feet firmly before him.

A subdued sobbing, as of a woman in distress, fell upon my ears, and leaning forward I peered into the moonlight to discover whence it came.

A high brick wall ran close to the roadway, covered with ivy and lichens, and leaning against an angle of this, a few steps before me, was a slight girlish form, draped in a dark mantle.

I sprang to the ground and softly approached her. Her face was buried in her hands and she sobbed bitterly.

"Mademoiselle," I said, speaking in French, "you are in trouble. Can I assist you in any way?"

She lifted her head, and the moonlight fell upon the most beautiful face I have ever seen. Absolutely faultless in feature, it was surmounted by a crown of yellow hair that shone like gold in the glare of the moonbeams, while a pair of deep violet eyes that even tears could not dim looked earnestly into mine.

"Who are you?" I asked gently, "and why are you here?"

"I am Amelie de Boursons, monsieur, and I reside at the chateau just within these gates."

The soft, musical notes of her voice added to the powerful impression her exquisite beauty had already produced upon my heart.

"But it is late," I continued; "surely some great misfortune must have befallen you to bring you here at this hour."

"It is true, Monsieur," she replied, struggling with a new paroxysm of grief; "to-morrow is my wedding day." The tone of despair in which these words were uttered startled me.

"But is that so terrible an event?" I asked.

"If you but knew, monsieur," she said, "how vile and brutal is the man they are forcing me to marry, you would willingly save me from my horrible fate!"

She accompanied these words with an appealing look into my face, and then she dropped her head and sobbed anew.

I did not stop to reason upon the strangeness of all this. I was a young, generous-hearted man in those days, and could not resist this appeal from beauty in distress.

"But, tell me," I said, "how can I save you from this distasteful marriage? Do you wish to fly? I have a conveyance close by, and will gladly escort you to a place of safety."

"To fly would avail me nothing," she answered with a sweet sadness; "they would follow us and force me to return."

"But how else can I save you?" I asked, helplessly.

"I do not know," she replied, with a sudden calmness that suggested despair. "But unless you can find some way to succor me I shall take my own life."

There was no doubt, from the expression of her low, earnest voice, that she meant this, and, filled with consternation at the thought, I racked my brain for some way to preserve both her life and happiness.

At last an idea came to me, but I trembled at my own presumption as I suggested it.

"Mademoiselle," I said, haltingly, "I see but one alternative. You must marry me."

I am free and able to give you all that would add to your happiness, and I shall learn to love you very dearly. It is true that I am a stranger to you, but I assure you that I am in all ways worthy to seek both your heart and your hand."

She gazed with earnestness into my face for a moment, and then replied slowly:

"I think I shall trust you, monsieur. Indeed, I cannot help myself. I will be your wife."

There was no coyness in her answer, no blush tinted the pale, beautiful face; simple dignity that commanded my respect and admiration.

"Then come," I said, eagerly; "we must lose no time. It will be midnight before we can hope to reach Danvers."

"Not Danvers," she replied, shrinking back as I sought to take her hand; "let us go to Tregonne; there is a notary there who will marry us, and we are far safer from pursuit."

"Very well," I answered, "let us be off."

Refusing my proffered assistance, Mlle. de Boursons walked to the carriage and sprang lightly to the back seat. Rather awkwardly I took my place in front, gathered up the reins and drove off as swiftly as I could induce the ancient steed to move.

Mademoiselle drew her mantle closely over her head and shoulders, and but once during the long drive did she speak. Then it was to direct me to the Tregonne road.

With ample time for reflection, my adventure now began to seem rather queer and uncanny, and by the time we discovered the lights of Tregonne twinkling before us I had come to doubt the perfect wisdom of my present course.

But it was too late to draw back now—and the girl was very beautiful.

"This is the notary's," said my companion, in her low, sweet voice, indicating by a gesture a rambling structure from whose windows gleamed a single light.

I leaped out, found the door at the

end of a long pathway, and knocked upon it loudly.

A tall, thin man, beyond the middle age, holding a tallow candle high above his head, answered my call.

"You are the notary?" I asked, briefly. He nodded assent.

"I wish to be married."

"Married!" he echoed in surprise, "but when, monsieur?"

"Now; at once."

"But the bride, monsieur?"

"I will fetch the bride. She is waiting without."

I thought he intended to protest, so I left him abruptly and returned for the lady. She was already coming toward the house, and as I met her she motioned me to go before, while she followed silently up the pathway.

The notary admitted us without any ceremony, and we entered a small, dimly-lighted room that appeared to be a study.

My companion at once seated herself in an arm chair, but without removing the muffings from her face.

The notary snuffed the candle, arranged his books, and, turning to me with a penetrating look, said:

"I must know your name, monsieur."

"Richard Harrington."

"Your residence?"

"I am an American."

He wrote the answers in his book. Then, glancing toward the arm chair, he continued:

"The lady's name?"

I waited for her to reply, but as she remained silent, I answered:

"Amelie de Boursons."

"Who?" cried the notary in a loud voice, springing to his feet, while a look of fear and consternation spread over his wrinkled face.

"Amelie de Boursons," I repeated, slowly, infected by the man's agitation in spite of myself.

The notary stared wildly at the muffled form of the lady. Then he drew out his handkerchief and wiped the beads of perspiration from his forehead.

"What does this mean, monsieur?" I demanded, angrily.

The man heeded me not the slightest, but clutching the edge of the table to steady himself, and extending his long, bony finger toward the girl, he exclaimed:

"Are you Amelie de Boursons?"

Slowly, with admirable grace and dignity, the lady drew back her mantle, and her marvelous beauty was again revealed.

The notary, with distended eyes fixed upon the vision, sank back in his chair with a low moan.

"This must be explained, monsieur," I cried, striding to his side and grasping his shoulder. "Is there any reason why I should not marry Mlle. de Boursons?"

"Mlle. de Boursons," returned the notary, still regarding her with horror, "has been dead these forty years!"

"Dead?" I echoed, staring first at the notary and then at the girl, while a sense of bewilderment overcame me.

Mlle. de Boursons arose with a charming smile and came to my side.

"See, monsieur," she exclaimed, mockingly, and giving me her hand, "do you also think me dead?"

The hand was as cold as ice, but its touch sent a strange thrill through my body.

"Come, monsieur," I said to the notary, who watched the scene in amazement, "read the ceremony at once. We are in haste."

I drew a seal ring from my finger and placed it upon her icy hand, and in its place slipped a large ruby from her own hand upon mine.

The ceremony concluded, I paid the notary, thanking him briefly for his services, and followed by my bride walked down the path to my carriage. The notary stood in the doorway, lighting us with the candle.

At the carriage I turned to hand my wife to her seat, but she had disappeared. I ran back to the doorway.

"Where is my wife?" I asked.

"She followed you down the path," said the man.

"But she is not there!"

Without a word the notary accompanied me back to the carriage. No trace of the girl was to be seen.

Right and left among the shrubbery I searched; I called aloud her name,

entreating her to come to me, but no sight of the beautiful face rewarded my efforts.

I returned to the notary's study filled with vague misgivings.

"Where can she be?" I asked, dismally.

"In her grave," was the hoarse answer.

"Monsieur?"

"I told you before that she was dead. It is true. You have wedded a ghost!"

The next morning, in company with the notary, I drove down the road till we came to the brick wall where I first saw Amelie de Boursons.

We entered the gates and walked to the chateau that stood in the neglected grounds. An old woman admitted us, the care taker, and at the notary's request allowed us to visit the gallery.

The notary threw back the shutters and the sun came in and flooded the portrait of a beautiful girl whose violet eyes regarded me with the same sweet expression I had noted in my bride of the previous evening.

"It is Amelie de Boursons," said the notary, in a gentle voice. "I have seen this picture often, and heard the girl's pitiful story, and that is why I knew her last night to be a mere phantom. Her father was a stern, hard man, who insisted upon her marrying a person utterly distasteful to the young girl. She tried to escape, but was captured and brought home to confront her fate. On the wedding morning they found her dead. She had taken her own life. That was forty years ago, monsieur!"

As we left the room I glanced curiously at the ruby that sparkled on my finger.

It is the only evidence I have ever possessed of my phantom bride.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

PEARL DIVERS OF CEYLON.

Marco Polo Tells of Charmers Who Keep Away Sharks.

When you leave the Island of Sellan and sail westward about sixty miles, you come to the great province of Maabar, which is styled India the Greater; it is the best of all the Indies, and is on the mainland.

In this province there are five kings, who are own brothers. I will tell you about each in turn. The province is the finest and noblest in the world.

At this end of the province reigns one of those five royal brothers, who is a crowned king and his name is Sonder Bandi Davar. In this kingdom they find fine and great pearls; and I will tell how they are got.

The sea here forms a gulf between the Island of Sellan and the mainland. And all round this gulf the water has a depth of no more than ten or twelve fathoms, and in some places no more than two fathoms. The pearlfishers take their vessels, great and small, and proceed into this gulf, where they stop from the beginning of April till the middle of May. They go first to a place called Bettelar, and then go sixty miles into the gulf. Here they cast anchor and shift from their large vessels into small boats. The merchants divide into various companies, and each of these must engage a number of men on wages, hiring them for April and half of May. Of all the produce they have first to pay the king, as his royalty, the tenth part. And they must also pay those men who charm the great fishes, to prevent them from injuring the divers while engaged in seeking pearls under water, one-twentieth part of all that they may take.

These fish-charmers are termed Abraimam; and their charm holds good for that day only, for at night they dissolve the charms so that the fishes can work mischief at their will. These Abraimam know also how to charm beasts and birds and every living thing. When the men have got into the small boats they jump into the water and dive to the bottom, which may be at a depth of from four to twelve fathoms, and there they remain as long as they are able. And there they find the shells that contain the pearls, and these they put into a net bag tied round the waist, and mount up to the surface with them, and then dive anew. When they can't hold their breath any longer they come up again, and, after a little, down they go once more, and so they go on all day. These shells are in shape like oysters or sea-hoods. And in these shells are found pearls, great and small, of every kind, sticking in the flesh of the shellfish.

In this manner pearls are fished in great quantities, for thence in fact come the pearls which are spread all over the world. And the king of that state hath a very great receipt and treasure from his dues upon those pearls.—St. Nicholas.

The Water Bicycle.
Ball bearings and scientific gear are creating a revolution in motors of all sorts. A new and promising invention is the hydrocycle, which is built on the catamaran principle, with cylinders of galvanized steel filled with air. A slight framework connects these two cylinders, and a bicycle gear is attached which drives light paddle-wheels of eight blades. The sprocket-wheel is set between the pedals in the same way as the sprocket-wheel and chain of the bicycle. The steering gear consists of two small steel rudders, operated by rudder-chains connected with the steering gear, somewhat after the fashion of the ordinary bicycle.

The hydrocycle is capable of a speed of ten miles an hour without hard work, and as the craft is so built that it can neither sink nor upset, the pleasure and safety of it are at once apparent. The cylinders are made with compartments so arranged that the fracture of one will not affect the others. The machine sits lightly on the water, can be turned in almost its own length, and, like the ordinary catamaran, will live in a sea which would upset a boat of a much larger size. It draws but a few inches of water. It is light, manageable and novel, a combination of qualities that makes it extremely attractive to those who are fond of water sports. Those already built will carry five or six hundred pounds, and are about ten feet in length of cylinder. Only a few have been built, but the experiments already made are sufficient to satisfy experts that the hydrocycle is one of the coming fads, and promises to furnish a great deal of pleasurable amusement.

Didn't Know When to Stop.
"Darling," said she, "do you love me as much as ever?"

"Yes, dearie," said he, with his nose buried in his newspaper.

That ought to have satisfied her, but she had to ask "Why?"

"Oh, I dunno, Habit, I guess."—Cincinnati Enquirer.

Even in This Rhyme.
The English language must be tough, At least that's what I've reckoned, For it is still alive to-day, Though murdered every second.—New York Truth.

Realistic Teeth.
"Hasn't she lovely teeth?"

"Almost too lovely. I can't make up my mind whether they are real or realistic."—Indianapolis Journal.

JOLLY JOKER.

"Yarbley has taken a violent distaste for opera." "What a clever stroke of economy."—Chicago Record.

He—"I love you better than my life." She—"Considering the life you lead, cannot say that I am surprised."—Indianapolis Journal.

"They say people who live together get to look alike." "Is that so? Well, just in the interest of science, let's try it."—Chicago Record.

Freddy—"What is statesmanship, papa?" Papa—"Statesmanship, my son, is successful politics."—New York Commercial Advertiser.

Brown—"Why do they call the bicycle 'the silent steed'?" Smith—"I don't know, exactly. The horse hasn't saying a word, is he?"—Puck.

Hobson—"Is Robson a man you can trust?" Dobson—"Yes; that is, if you lend him anything; it's all you can do."—New York Commercial Advertiser.

The Governess—"I know French and German." Mrs. Uptodate—"That is not sufficient, I want some one who can teach my children Scotch."—Brooklyn Life.

Frauces—"Yes, he is pursuing literature." Gertrude—"Indeed! And is a very successful?" Frauces—"No. He is still a long way ahead of him."—Cleveland Leader.

"Mos' men," said Uncle Eben, "talk 'bout de common's kind o' trouble like dey done 'scowered 'em an' could git 'em patented of dey chose."—Washington Star.

"While Miss Fitz was away, Georgy took her parrot." "Anything happen?" "I don't know; she keep the parrot down cellar now, and the engagement is off."—Life.

Leola—"Don't you think they are two souls with but a single thought?" Hazel—"Well, I shouldn't wonder. They are both making fools of themselves."—Truth.

"What is a hardy rosebush?" "It is one that doesn't mind your mother pulling it up by the roots every few days to see if it has begun to grow yet."—Chicago Record.

"Some men," said Uncle Eben, "kin train er dog ter do anyting dey tells 'im an' at de same time de mos' disobedient chillun in de neighborhood."—Washington Star.

Wickwire—"You made some money on the fight, didn't you?" Mudge—"No; don't think I did. I won \$25 and spent \$48 of it the same night."—Indianapolis Journal.

He (fervently)—"Your eyes are like the stars above." She (sleepily)—"There are no stars above just now, Charles—the sun is about to rise."—Brooklyn Daily Eagle.

Hostess—"Ah, M. Le Ministre, sit down on this Ottoman." Russian Diplomat—"Parbleu! I would razer stand. Ze vare thought ezz eempossible!"—New York Press.

He—"Do you think your father would offer me personal violence if I were to ask him for you?" She—"No, but I think he will if you don't pretty soon."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Wildly was thinking of a late experience at the club, when his wife asked: "Did Mr. Lusk call?" "Not him; I bluffed him with a \$10—or—what was that, dear?"—Baltimore News.

She—"Did you have any trouble in getting papa to listen to you?" He—"Not a bit. I began by telling him I knew of a plan whereby he could save money."—Cincinnati Enquirer.

Getting acquainted: "Are you the new girl?" asked Mr. Wheeler, coming down to breakfast. "Yes, sir," replied the maid. "What make of wheel do you ride?"—Yonkers Statesman.

"It's a shame," cried the young wife; "not a thing in the house fit to eat. I'm going right home to papa!" "If you don't mind, dear," said the husband, reaching for his hat, "I'll go with you."—Yonkers Statesman.

Hodge—"Hello, ole man, what's goin' on in Pumpkinville?" Podge—"Nuthin'. W'y, hit's jest got so blamed dull house rent has stopped an' the interest on what a feller owes bez plum quit."—Atlanta Constitution.

"There was a strange man here to see you to-day, papa," said little Ethel, who met her father in the hall as he came home on Wednesday night. "Did he have a bill?" "No, papa. He had just a plain nose."—Newark Call.

Walker—"They say that Napoleon was so self-possessed that not even the sound of pistol fired close to his ear could make him start." Wheeler—"He wouldn't have stood much show in a bicycle race."—Indianapolis Journal.

"From state to state the spirit walks," quoted Mrs. Ticounter; "now, I wonder what Tennyson meant by that?" "I suppose," said Mr. Ticounter, reminiscently, "that he referred to Hamlet's father's ghost walking in from Fargo."—Puck.

"So you want to marry Fred, do you?" said the father. "Yes, papa," replied the daughter, with her arms about his neck. "And go away and leave me all alone?" "Why, no, papa! I know Fred will be willing to leave mamma with you!"—Yonkers Statesman.