

MRS. BULLFROG.

BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.

It makes me melancholy to see how like fools some very sensible people act in the matter of choosing wives. They perplex their judgments by a most undue attention to little niceties of personal appearance, habits, disposition, and other trifles which concern nobody but the lady herself. An unhappy gentleman, resolving to wed nothing short of perfection, keeps his heart and hand till both get so old and withered that no tolerable woman will accept them. Now, this is the very height of absurdity. A kind Providence has so skillfully adapted sex to sex and the mass of individuals to each other, that, with certain obvious exceptions, any male and female may be moderately happy in the married state. The true rule is, to ascertain that the match is fundamentally a good one, and then take it for granted that all minor objections, should they be such, will vanish if you let them alone. Only put yourself beyond hazard as to the real basis of matrimonial bliss, and it is scarcely to be imagined what miracles, in the way of recognizing smaller incongruities, connubial love will effect.

For my own part, I freely confess that, in my bachelorship, I was precisely such an over-curious simpleton as I now advise the reader not to be. My early habits had gifted me with a feminine sensibility and too exquisite refinement. I was the accomplished graduate of a dry goods store, where, by dint of ministering to the whims of fine ladies, and suiting silken hose to delicate limbs, and handling satins, ribbons, chintzes, calicoes, tapes, gauze, and cambric needles, I grew up a very lady-like sort of a gentleman. It is not assuming too much to affirm that the ladies themselves were hardly so lady-like as Thomas Bullfrog. So painfully acute was my sense of female imperfection, and such varied excellence did I require in the woman whom I could love, that there was an awful risk of my getting no wife at all, or of being driven to perpetrate matrimony with my own image in the looking glass. Besides the fundamental principle already hinted at, I demanded the fresh bloom of youth, pearly teeth, glossy ringlets, and the whole list of lovely items, with the utmost delicacy of habits and sentiments, a silken texture of mind, and, above all, the virgin heart. In a word, if a young angel just from Paradise, yet dressed in earthly fashion, had come and offered me her hand, it is by no means certain that I should have taken it. There was every chance of my becoming a most miserable old bachelor, when, by the best luck in the world, I made a journey into another state, and was smitten by, and smote again, and wooed, and won and married the present Mrs. Bullfrog, all in the space of a fortnight. Owing to these extemporaneous measures, I not only gave my bride credit for certain perfections which have not as yet come to light, but also overlooked a few trifling defects, which, however, glimmered on my perception long before the close of the honeymoon. Yet, as there was no mistake about the fundamental principle aforesaid, I soon learned, as will be seen, to estimate Mrs. Bullfrog's deficiencies and superfluities at exactly their proper value.

The same morning that Mrs. Bullfrog and I came together as a unit, we took two seats in the stage-coach and began our journey towards my place of business. There being no other passengers, we were as much alone and as free to give vent to our raptures as if I had hired a hack for the matrimonial jaunt. My bride looked charmingly in a green silk calash and riding-habit of pelisse-cloth; and, whenever her red lips parted with a smile, each tooth appeared like an inestimable pearl. Such was my passionate warmth that—we had rattled out of the village, gentle reader, and were as lonely as Adam and Eve in Paradise—I pleaded guilty to no less freedom than a kiss. The gentle eye of Mrs. Bullfrog scarcely rebuked me for the profanation. Emboldened by her indulgence, I threw back the calash from her polished brow, and suffered my fingers, white and delicate as her own, to stray among those dark and glossy curls which realized my day-dreams of rich hair.

"My love," said Mrs. Bullfrog, tenderly, "you will disarrange my curls."

"O no, my sweet Laura!" replied I, still playing with the glossy ringlet. "Even your fair hand could not manage a curl more delicately than mine. I propose myself the pleasure of doing up your hair in papers every evening at the same time with my own."

"Mr. Bullfrog," repeated she, "you must not disarrange my curls."

This was spoken in a more decided tone than I had happened to hear, until then, from my gentlest of all gentle brides. At the same time she put up her hand and took mine prisoner; but merely drew it away from the forbidden ringlet, and then immediately released it. Now, I am a fidgety little man, and always love to have something in my fingers; so that, being debarred from my wife's curls, I looked about me for any other plaything. On the front seat of the coach there was one of those small baskets in which traveling ladies who are too delicate to appear at a public table generally carry a supply of gingerbread, biscuits and cheese, cold ham, and other light refreshments,

merely to sustain nature to the journey's end. Such airy diet will sometimes keep them in pretty good flesh for a week together. Laying hold of this same little basket, I thrust my hand under the newspaper with which it was carefully covered.

"What's this, my dear?" cried I; for the black neck of a bottle popped out of the basket.

"A bottle of Kalydor, Mr. Bullfrog," said my wife, coolly taking the basket from my hands and replacing it on the front seat.

There was no possibility of doubting my wife's word; but I never knew a genuine Kalydor, such as I use for my own complexion, to smell so much like cherry-brandy. I was about to express my fears that the lotion would injure her skin, when an accident occurred which threatened more than a skin-deep injury. Our Jehu had carelessly driven over a heap of gravel and fairly capsize the coach, with the wheels in the air and our heads where our heads should have been. What became of my wits I cannot imagine; they have always had a perverse trick of deserting me just when they were most needed; but so it chanced, that in the confusion of our over-throw I quite forgot that there was a Mrs. Bullfrog in the world. Like many men's wives, the good lady served her husband as a stepping-stone. I had scrambled out of the coach and was instinctively settling my cravat, when somebody brushed roughly by me, and I heard a smart thwack upon the coachman's ear.

"Take that, you villain!" cried a strange, coarse voice. "You have ruined me, you blackguard! I shall never be the woman I have been!"

And then came a second thwack, aiming at the driver's other ear; but which missed it, and hit him on the nose, causing a terrible effusion of blood. Now, who or what fearful apparition was inflicting this punishment on the poor fellow remained an impenetrable mystery to me. The blows were given by a person of grisly aspect, with a head almost bald, and sunken cheeks, apparently of the feminine gender, though hardly to be classed in the gentler sex. There being no teeth to modulate the voice, it had a mumbled fierceness, not passionate, but stern, which absolutely made me quiver like a calf's foot jelly. Who could the phantom be? The most awful circumstance of the affair is yet to be told, for this, orge, or whatever it was, had a riding-habit like Mrs. Bullfrog's, and also a green silk calash dangling down her back by the strings. In my terror and turmoil of mind I could imagine nothing less than that the Old Nick, at the moment of our overturn, had annihilated my wife and jumped into her petticoats. This idea seemed the more probable, since I could nowhere perceive Mrs. Bullfrog alive, nor, though I looked very sharply about the coach, could I detect any traces of that beloved woman's body. There would have been a comfort in giving her Christian burial.

"Come, sir, bestir yourself! Help this rascal to set up the coach," said the hob-goblin to me; then, with a terrific screech to the three countrymen at a distance, "Here, you fellows, ain't you ashamed to stand off when a poor woman is in distress?"

The countrymen, instead of fleeing for their lives, came running at full speed, and laid hold of the topsy-turvy coach. I, also, though a small-sized man, went to work like a son of Anak. The coachman, too, with the blood still streaming from his nose, tugged and toiled most manfully, dreading, doubtless, that the next blow might break his head. And yet, bemoaned as the poor fellow had been, he seemed to glance at me with an eye of pity, as if my case were more deplorable than his. But I cherished a hope that all would turn out a dream, and seized the opportunity, as we raised the coach, to jam two of my fingers under the wheel, trusting that the pain would awaken me.

"Why, here we are, all to rights again!" exclaimed a sweet voice behind. "Thank you for your assistance, gentlemen. My dear Mr. Bullfrog, how you perspire! Do let me wipe your face. Don't take this little accident too much to heart, good driver. We ought to be thankful that none of our necks are broken."

"We might have spared one neck out of the three," muttered the driver, rubbing his ear and pulling his nose, to ascertain whether he had been cuffed or not. "Why, the woman's a witch!"

I fear that the reader will not believe, yet it is positively a fact, that there stood Mrs. Bullfrog, with her glossy ringlets curling on her brow, and two rows of Orient pearl gleaming between her parted lips, which wore a most angelic smile. She had regained her riding-habit and calash from the grisly phantom, and was, in all respects, the lovely woman who had been sitting by my side at the instant of our overturn. How she had happened to disappear, and who had supplied her place, and whence she did now return, were problems too knotty for me to solve. There stood my wife. That was the one thing certain among a heap of mysteries. Nothing remained but to help her into the coach, and plod on, through the journey of the day and the journey of life, as comfortably as we could. As the driver closed the door upon us, I heard him whisper to the three countrymen—

"How do you suppose a fellow feels

shut up in a cage with a she-tiger?"

Of course this query could have no reference to my situation. Yet, unreasonable as it may appear, I confess that my feelings were not altogether so ecstatic as when I first called Mrs. Bullfrog mine. True, she was a sweet woman and an angel of a wife; but what if a Gorgon should return, amid the transports of our connubial bliss, and take the angel's place. I recollected the tale of a fairy, who half the time was a beautiful woman and half the time a hideous monster. Had I taken that very fairy to be the wife of my bosom? While such whims and chimeras were flitting across my fancy I began to look askance at Mrs. Bullfrog, almost expecting that the transformation would be wrought before my eyes.

To divert my mind, I took up the newspaper which had covered the little basket of refreshments, and which now lay at the bottom of the coach, blushing with a deep-red stain and emitting a potent spirituous fume from the contents of the broken bottle of Kalydor. The paper was two or three years old, but contained an article of several columns, in which I soon grew wonderfully interested. It was the report of a trial for breach of promise of marriage, giving the testimony in full, with fervid extracts from both the gentleman's and lady's amatory correspondence. The deserted damsel had personally appeared in court, and had borne energetic evidence to her lover's perfidy and the strength of her blighted affections. On the defendant's part there had been an attempt, though insufficiently sustained, to blast the plaintiff's character, and a plea, in mitigation of damages, on account of her unamiable temper. A horrible idea was suggested by the lady's name.

"Madam," said I, holding the newspaper before Mrs. Bullfrog's eyes—and, though a small, delicate and thin-visaged man, I feel assured that I looked very terrific—"madam," repeated I, through my shut teeth, "were you the plaintiff in this cause?"

"O, my dear Mr. Bullfrog," replied my wife, sweetly, "I thought all the world knew that!"

"Horror! horror!" exclaimed I, sinking back on the seat. Covering my face with both hands, I emitted a deep and death-like groan, as if my tormented soul were rending me asunder—I, the most exquisitely fastidious of men, and whose wife was to have been the most delicate and refined of women, with all the fresh dewdrops glittering on her virgin rosebud of a heart!

I thought of the glossy ringlets and pearly teeth; I thought of the Kalydor; I thought of the coachman's bruised ear and bloody nose; I thought of the tender love-secrets which she had whispered to the judge and jury, and a thousand titrating auditors—and gave another groan!

"Mr. Bullfrog," said my wife. As I made no reply, she gently took my hands within her own, removed them from my face, and fixed her eyes steadfastly on mine.

"Mr. Bullfrog," said she, not unkindly, yet with all the decision of her strong character, "let me advise you to overcome this foolish weakness, and prove yourself, to the best of your ability, as good a husband as I will be a wife. You have discovered, perhaps, some little imperfections in your bride. Well, what did you expect? Women are not angels. If they were, they would go to heaven for husbands; or, at least, be more difficult in their choice on earth."

"But why conceal those imperfections?" interposed I, tremulously.

"Now, my love, are not you a most unreasonable little man?" said Mrs. Bullfrog, patting me on the cheek. Ought a woman to disclose her frailties earlier than her wedding day? Few husbands, I assure you, make the discovery in such good season, and still fewer complain that these trifles are concealed too long. Well, what a strange man you are! Poh! you are joking."

"But the suit for breach of promise!" groaned I.

"Ah, and is that the rub?" exclaimed my wife. "Is it possible that you view that affair in an objectionable light? Mr. Bullfrog, I never could have dreamed it! Is it an objection that I have triumphantly defended myself against slander and vindicated my purity in a court of justice? Or do you complain because your wife has shown the proper spirit of a woman, and punished the villain who trifled with her affections?"

"But," persisted I, shrinking into a corner of the coach, however; for I did not know precisely how much contradiction the proper spirit of a woman would endure—"but, my love, would it not have been more dignified to treat the villain with the silent contempt he merited?"

"That is all very well, Mr. Bullfrog," said my wife, slyly, "but, in that case, where would have been the five thousand dollars which are to stock your dry-goods store?"

"Mrs. Bullfrog, upon your honor," demanded I, as if my life hung upon her words, "is there no mistake about those five thousand dollars?"

"Upon my word and honor there is none," replied she. "The jury gave me every cent the rascal had; and I have kept it all for my dear Bullfrog."

"Then, thou dear woman," cried I,

with an overwhelming gust of tenderness, "let me fold thee to my heart. The basis of matrimonial bliss is secure, and all thy little defects and frailties are forgiven. Nay, since the result has been so fortunate, I rejoice at the wrongs which drove thee to this blessed lawsuit. Happy Bullfrog that I am!"

Sad, But Can't be Helped.

A certain ring of half a dozen men have for the past year been in the habit of meeting at a certain Detroit drug store every evening to tell stories and indulge in gossip, and the way they have hung on each time has been a terrible trial to the druggist. The other day, after a severe struggle with himself, he tackled one of the coterie about it, explaining:

"Of course I don't want to hurt your feelings, but seems to me you could break up an hour earlier."

"Oh, no offense whatever," was the reply, "but I'll tell you what the trouble is. If we could all go out together it would be all right, but if one gets up and starts off the rest all talk about him."

"How?"

"Well, if the Colonel goes out, the door hardly closes on him before somebody remarks that it is curious how he got his title as he was in Canada all through the war. If the Judge follows him some one says he doesn't know any more about law than a hog does of playing the piano. If I go out, some one hints that I had to leave Indiana for setting my grocery on fire, and so it goes. You see how embarrassing it is?"

"I'll fix it after this," replied the druggist after a little reflection, and that night, as 10 o'clock struck, a boy came in and announced a big fire down town. The gang went out in a body, and although the report was false not one returned. The next night the boy announced an accident around the corner, and the next he had a stabbing affair near by. The gang soon tumbled to the racket, and now, as the clock strikes 10, every man rises to his feet and they go out together. This places all on an equal footing, and there is only one sad thought connected with the scheme. It is that the druggist and his clerk, who must perforce be left behind, will slander and abuse the whole gang as soon as their backs are turned.—Free Press.

Where is Mr. Barnum Now?

A baby mermaid is on exhibition in Edward W. Thomas's store at the corner of West and Gifford streets. It is the property of William A. Lawrence, who lives at No. 40 Sabine street, and is the male of the one recently sold to Cornell University for \$150. In appearance it has absolutely nothing in common with the fabled beings of pagan antiquity. The flesh has been dried to the bones, and the wings, intended by nature as a covering and protection for the body, are folded back, the head-piece standing up very prominently. The mouth is large and partly open, showing two rows of sharply pointed white teeth. The expression of the face, which bears a faint suggestion of resemblance to the similar feature in the human anatomy, is vicious and almost ferocious. The legs are long, slender and furnished at the extremities with web-like formations that in their dried condition are not unlike a doll's feet. The length of the creature from the head to the tip of the tail is about sixteen inches.—Syracuse Herald.

An Elf in Song.

Over the sunny meadows,
Down through the singing pines,
Where mosses are clasped in shadows,
And only the mica shines.

O sweet are the woodland alters,
And bright are the greenwood ways,
With their feet in the sparkling waters,
And their foreheads crowned with bays!

'Tis the time when the sunset tinges
The last of the daytime hours,
And the bank is hung with fringes
Of pink azalea flowers.

'Tis late in the misty dim light,
And up to the amber stars,
The fairies are floating out of sight—
Over the dead stars.

And the Elf queen comes from the hillside
Under the light of the moon,
Where the Jasper doorways open wide
At the sound of the silver shoon.

She sings down the woodland spaces
All under the dog-wood spray,
Where the violets hide their faces
And think of the rose-draped May.

There where the laurels quiver,
Where lovers meet and part,
She dreams of the elfin river
And sleeps on the lily's heart.

—Kit Courtland, in St. Louis Magazine.

An Expert Counterfeiter.

J. L. Dye, the counterfeit detector, has in his possession two of the most unique counterfeiters that have obtained circulation since Hill made himself famous in St. Louis by cutting bills in such a manner that he made ten bills where he had had but nine. This new genius is an expert in the use of the pen, and all the stock and tools he needs for the work are pens, magnifier and paper of the proper texture. He then creates the bill, not using any printing machinery whatever. The bills Mr. Dye has are a \$10 and a \$20, both of them being executed with such perfection as to detail that were it not for some of the slightest irregularities and the fact the bill blurs when moistened, detection would not be possible. The Secret Service people have not been able to find the maker, as he shoves his own bills in such localities that the bill is not subjected to the experts.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

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