

PETER'S RIDE TO THE WEDDING.

Peter would ride to the wedding—he would,
So he mounted his ass—and his wife,
She was to ride behind, if she could,
“For,” says Peter, “the woman, she should
Follow, not lead through life.”

He's mighty convenient, the ass, my dear,
And proper and safe—and now
You hold by the tail, while I hold by the ear,
And we'll ride to the kirk in time, never fear,
If the wind and the weather allow.”

The wind and the weather were not to be
blamed,

But the ass had adopted the whim
That two at a time was a load never framed.
For the back of one ass, and he seemed
quite ashamed.

That two should stick fast upon him.

“Come, Dobbin,” says Peter, “I’m thinking
we’ll trot.”

“I’m thinking we won’t,” says the ass,
In language of conduct, and stuck to the
spot.

As if he had sworn he would sooner be shot
Than lift up a toe from the grass.

Says Peter, says he, “I’ll whip him a little,”
“Try it, my dear,” says she—

But he might just as well have whipped a
brass kettle.

The ass was made of such obstinate mettle
That never a step moved he.

“I’ll prick him, my dear, with a needle,” said
she,

“I’m thinking he’ll alter his mind.”—
The ass felt the needle and up went his
heels,

“I’m thinking,” says Peter, “he’s beginning
to feel.”

Some notion of moving—behind.”

“Now lend me the needle, and I’ll prick his
ear,

And set t’other end, too, agoing.”

The ass felt the needle, and upward he reared;
But kicking and rearing was all, it appear-
ed,

He’d any intention of doing.

Says Peter, says he, “We get on rather slow,
While one end is up, t’other sticks to the
ground;

But I’m thinking a method to move him I
know:

Let’s prick head and tail to, ether, and so
Give the creature a start all around.

So said, so done; all hands were at work,
And the ass he did alter his mind,

For he started away with so sudden a jerk
That in less than a trice he arrived at the
kirk,

But he left a l l his lading behind.

CHOOSING A WIFE.

John Harlow, a young New York lawyer, told his partner that he wanted to go home for a week. He said he wanted to see his father and the boys and his sister, but that he especially wanted to ride old Bob to the brook once more, and to milk Cherry again, just to see how it felt to be a farmer's boy.

“John,” said the old lawyer, “be sure you fix up a match with one of those country girls; no man is fit for anything till he is well married; and you are now able, with economy, to support a wife. Mind you get one of those country girls. The paste and powder people here aren’t fit for a young man who wants a young woman.”

The next morning John had a letter from his sister. Part of it ran thus.

“I’ve concluded, old fellow, that if you don’t marry, you’ll dry up and turn to parchment. I’m going to bring home the smartest girl I know. Of course, she don’t know what I’m up to, but you must prepare to capitulate.”

In the old home they were looking for the son. The family proper consisted of the father, good deacon Harlow, John’s two brothers, ten and twelve years old, and Huldah, the “help.” This last was the daughter of a neighboring farmer, who was a poor and helpless rheumatic, and most of the daughter’s hard earnings went to help out the scanty subsistence at home. Aunt Judith, the sister of John’s mother, “looked after” the household affairs of her brother-in-law, by coming over once a week and helping Huldah darn, and mend, and make, and by giving her such advice as her inexperience was supposed to require. But now Deacon Harlow’s daughter had left her husband to eat his turkey alone in Boston, and had brought her two children home to receive the paternal blessing. Not that Mrs. Amanda Holmes had the paternal blessing chiefly in view in her trip. She had brought with her a very dear friend, Miss Janet Dunton, the accomplished teacher in the Parnassus Female Seminary. Why Miss Janet Dunton came to the country with her friend she could

hardly have told. Not a word had Mrs. Holmes spoken to her on the subject of matrimonial schemes. She would have repelled any insinuation that she had ever dreamed that marriage was desirable under any conceivable circumstances. She often declared, sentimentally, that she was wedded to her books, and loved her leisure, and was determined to be an old maid. And all the time this sincere, Christian girl was dying to confer herself upon some worthy man of congenial tastes; which meant, in her case, just what it did in John Harlow’s—some one who could admire her attainments.

Mrs. Holmes and her friend had arrived twenty-four hours ahead of John, and the daughter of the house had already installed herself as temporary mistress, by thoughtlessly upsetting, reversing and turning inside out all the good Huldah’s most cherished arrangements. All the plans for the annual festival that wise and practical Huldah had entertained were vetoed, without a thought that this young girl had been for a year and a half in actual authority in the house, and might have some feeling of wrong in having a guest for a week overturn her plans for the next month. But Mrs. Holmes was not one of the kind to think of that. Huldah was hired and paid, and she never dreamed that hired people could have any interest in their work or their home other than their pay and their food. But Huldah was patient, though she confessed that she had a feeling that she had been rudely “trampled all over.” I suspect she had a cry at the end of the first day. I cannot affirm it, except from a general knowledge of woman.

When John drove up in the buggy that the boys had taken to the depot for him, his first care was to shake hands with the deacon, who was glad to see him, but could not forbear expressing a hope that he would “shave that hair off his upper lip.” Then John greeted his sister cordially, and was presented to Miss Dunton. Instead of sitting down, he pushed right into the kitchen, where Huldah, in a calico frock and a clean, white apron, was baking biscuits for tea. She had been a schoolmate of his, and he took her hand cordially, as she stood there, with the bright western sun half glorifying her head and face.

“Why, Huldah, how you’ve grown!” was his first word of greeting. He meant more than he said; for, though she was not handsome, she had grown exceedingly comely as she developed into a woman.

“Undignified as ever!” said Amanda, as she returned to the sitting-room.

The next day the ladies could get no good out of John Harlow. He got up early and milked the cow. He cut wood and carried it for Huldah. He rode old Bob to the brook for water. He did everything he had been accustomed to when a boy, finding as much pleasure in forgetting that he was a man, as he had once found in hoping to be a man. The two boys enjoyed his society greatly, and his father was delighted to see that he retained his interest in farm life. John was not insensible to Janet Dunton’s charms. She could talk fluently about all the authors most in vogue, and the effect of her fluency was really dazzling to a man. John was infatuated with the idea of marrying a wife of such attainments. How she would dazzle his friends! How the governor would like to talk to her! How she would shine in his parlors! How she would delight people as she gave them tea and talked at the same time! John was in love with her as he would have been in love with a tea urn or a rare book. During that week he walked and rode in the sleigh with Miss Dunton, and made up his mind that he would carry this brilliant prize to New York. But, with lawyer-like caution, he thought he would put off the commitment as long as possible. If his heart had been in his attentions, the caution would not have been worth much. Caution is a good breakwater against vanity, but it isn’t worth much against the spring-tide of love, as John Harlow soon found.

For toward the end of the week he began to feel a warmer feeling for Miss Janet. I do not think that John was seriously in love with Miss Dunton. If he had been he would have found some means of communicating with her. A thousand spies, with sleepless eyes all around their heads, cannot keep a man from telling his love somehow, if he really has any love to tell.

He observed often during the week that Huldah was depressed. He could not exactly account for it, until he noticed something in his sister’s behavior toward her that awakened his suspicion.

As soon as an opportunity offered he inquired of Huldah, affecting at the same time to know something about it.

“I don’t want to complain of your sister to you, Mr. Harlow.”

“Pshaw! call me John, and as for my sister, I know her faults better than you do.”

“Well, it is only that she told me that Miss Dunton wasn’t used to eating at the same table with servants, and, when one of the boys told your father, he was mad, and came to me and said: ‘Huldah, you must eat when the rest do. If you stay away from the table on account of these city snobs, I’ll make a fuss on the spot.’ So, to avoid a fuss, I have kept going to the table.”

John was greatly vexed with this. He was a chivalrous fellow, and he knew how much such a remark must wound a person who had never learned that domestic service had anything degrading in it. And the result was just the opposite of what his sister hoped. John paid more attention to Huldah Manners because she was the victim of oppression.

But, sitting in the old “best room,” in the dark, while the ladies were getting ready, and trying to devise a way by which he might get an opportunity to speak with Miss Dunton alone, it occurred to him that she was at that time in the sitting-room, waiting for his sister. To step out to where she was and present the case would not be difficult, and it might be all settled before the sister came down stairs. The fates were against him, however, for, just as he was about to act upon his thought, he heard Amanda Holmes’ abundant dresses sweeping down the stairway. He could not help hearing the conversation that followed.

“You see, Janet, I got up this trip tonight to keep John from spending the evening in the kitchen. He hasn’t a bit of dignity, and would spend the evening romping with the children and talking with Huldah, if he took it into his head.”

“Well,” said Janet, “one can overlook everything in a man of your brother’s culture. But what a queer way your country servants have of pushing themselves. Would not I make them know their places!”

And all this was said with the kitchen door open, and with the intention of wounding Huldah!

John’s castle tumbled. The erudite wife alongside the silver tea-urn faded out of sight rapidly. If knowledge could not give a touch of humane regard for the feelings of a poor girl, toiling dutifully and self-denyingly to support her family, of what account was it?

Two minutes before he was about to give his life to Janet Dunton. Now there was a gulf wider than the world between them. He slipped out of the best room by the outside door, and came in through the kitchen. The neighbor’s sleigh that was to call for them was already at the door, and John begged them to excuse him. He had set his heart on helping Huldah make mince pies, as he used to help his mother when a boy. His sister was in despair, but she did not say much. She told John it was time he was getting over his queer freaks. And the sleigh drove off.

For an hour afterward John romped with his sister’s children, and told stories to the boys, and talked to his father. When a man has bare y escaped going over a precipice he does not like to think too much about it. John did not.

At last the little children went to bed. The old gentleman grew sleepy and retired. The boys went into the sitting room and went to sleep, one on the lounge and one on the floor. Huldah was just ready to begin her pies. She was deeply hurt, but John succeeded in making her more cheerful. He rolled up his sleeves and went to rolling out the pastry. He thought he had never seen a sweeter picture than the young girl in clean dress and apron, with her sleeves rolled up above her elbows. There was a statuesque perfection in her well-rounded arms. The heat of the fire had flushed her face a little, and she was laughing merrily at John’s awkward blunders in pie-making. John was delighted—he hardly knew why. In fixing a pie-crust, his fingers touched hers, and he started as though he had touched a galvanic battery. He looked at Huldah, and saw a half-painful expression in her flushed face.

For the first time it occurred to him that Huldah Manners had excited in him a feeling a thousand times deeper than anything he had felt toward Janet, who seemed to be now in another world. For the first time he realized that he had been more in love with Huldah

than with Janet all the time. Why n marry her? And then he remembered what the governor had said about marrying a woman’s heart and not her head.

He put on his hat and walked out—out, out, into the darkness, the drizzling rain, and the slush of melting snow, fighting a fierce battle. All his pride and all his cowardly vanity were on one side, and the irresistible torrents of his love on the other. He walked away into the dark wood pasture, trying to cool his brow, trying to think, and (would you believe it?) trying to pray, for it was a great struggle, and in any great struggle a true soul finds something very like prayer in his heart.

The feeling of love may exist without attracting the attention of its possessor. It had never occurred to John that he could love or marry Huldah. Thus it had grown all the more powerful for not being observed, and now the unseen fire had, like a flash, appeared as an all-consuming one.

Turning back, he stood without the window, in the shadow, and looked through the glass at the trim young girl at work with her pies. In the modest, restful face he read the story of a heart that had carried a great burden patiently and nobly. What a glorious picture was she of warmth and light, framed in darkness. To his heart, at that moment, all the light and warmth of the world centered in Huldah. All the world beside was loneliness, and darkness, and drizzle and slush. His fear of his sister and of his friends seemed base and cowardly. And the more he looked at this vision of the night, this revelation of peace, and love, and light, the more he was determined to possess it. You will call him precipitate. But when all a man’s nobility is on one side, and all his meanness on the other, why hesitate? Besides, John Harlow had done more thinking in that half hour than most men do in a month.

The vision vanished from the window, and he went in and sat down. She had, by this time, put in the last pie, and was sitting with her head on her hand. The candle flickered and went out, and there was only the weird ruddy firelight. I cannot tell you what words passed between John and the surprised Huldah, who had thought him already betrothed to Miss Dunton. I could not tell what was said in the light of the fire; I don’t suppose that Huldah could tell the story herself.

Huldah asked that he should not say anything about it till his sister was gone. Of course, John saw that she asked it for his sake. But his own cowardice was glad of the shelter.

Next day a brother of John’s (whom I forgot to mention before) came home from college. Mrs. Holmes’ husband arrived unexpectedly. Aunt Judith, with her family, came over at dinner-time, so that there was a large and merry party. Two hearts, at least, joined in the deacon’s thanksgiving before dinner, with much fervor.

At the table the dinner was very much admired.

“Huldah,” said Janet Dunton, “I like your pies. I wish I could hire you to go to Boston. Our cook never does well.”

John saw the well-aimed shaft hidden under this compliment, and all his manhood rallied. As soon as he could be sure of himself, he said:

“You cannot have Huldah; she is already engaged.”

“How is that?” said Aunt Judith.

“Oh, I’ve secured her services,” said John.

“What,” said Mrs. Holmes, “engaged your help before you engaged a wife?”

“Not at all,” said John; “engaged my help and wife in one. I hope that Huldah Manners will be Huldah Marlow by Christmas.”

The deacon laid down his knife and dropped his lower jaw and started.

“What! How! What did you say, John?”

“I say, father, that this good girl, Huldah, is to be my wife.”

“John,” gasped the old man, getting to his feet and reaching his hand across the table, “you’ve got a plenty of sense if you do wear a moustache! God bless you, my boy; there ain’t no better woman here, nor in New York, nor anywhere, than Huldah. God bless you both. I was afraid that you’d take a different road, though.”

“Hurrah for Huldah and our John,” said George Harlow, the college boy, and his brother joined him. Even the little Holmes children hurraed.

The new management of the Union Pacific Railroad has taken hold in earnest, revoking all the passes issued by Tom Scott, for the first thing.—*Indianapolis Journal.*