

THE PROFESSOR MARRYING A COOK.

Some years since, when I was in college, we had amongst our "faculty" a curious personage, whom every one regarded with considerable respect, and yet as a character *sui generis*. He had lived many years without a wife, and expected to live so always. Indeed, as he was the professor of mathematics, the abstraction of his science forbade his indulging in the idea of getting married. To the female sex, therefore, he showed no other regard than common politeness required. His character, in this particular, was purely negative. Of course he was popular with the ladies, and they kept themselves at a distance from him. But circumstances that often bring about a match in other cases, placed him in a peculiar dilemma. It seemed a whim that a necessity was laid upon him to get married. He was one of the faculty of the College, all the other professors were married and obliged to entertain the distinguished visitors of the Institution. He had always boarded. Of course it wasn't expected of him that he should ever give a party or a dinner. But it began to be regarded as rather mean in him to shirk off this matter from year to year, and well off as he was pecuniarily, to throw upon the other members of the faculty the cost and trouble of entertaining the specials, friends and patrons of the College. The question was, therefore frequently asked:

"Why doesn't the old miser entertain some of the distinguished visitors that visit us?"

Now our professor wasn't a miser at all, and it often troubled him to think he was so situated that he couldn't bear his part of the burden. And yet what could he do? Must he get married? And if so, to whom? He had no special regard for any one in the vicinity of the college, and no one had any special regard for him. In his younger days he had seen at school, a young lady in the city of New York, in whom he had felt a peculiar interest. But of her he had not heard for years. Doubtless before this time she was married, or in her grave. Possibly, however, she was still living and waiting for him! Glorious thought! He was quite relieved at it, though, indeed, there might be no foundation for his relief. Nevertheless, he would make due inquiry. Nor could he long delay, for commencement day was at hand, only a week off. It was his turn, or rather it would be if he was married, to give the great dinner to the distinguished personages who would be present on the occasion. There would be the Governor of the State, and his lady—the trustees of the Institution and their friends, and others of equal repute. But who should be master of ceremonies? And who should grace the table? He could square the circle perhaps, but such a circle as this, what could he do with it? If he were only married, what a helpmeet would his wife be at such a time. And yet, his wife must be a good looking, accomplished, and intelligent lady; otherwise the blank would be a blot!

Now there was a young lady in the neighborhood that the professor thought might answer. He had seen her at his boarding-house, and spoken to her once or twice.

"But," she may say no, and if she did, "where in creation," thought he, "could I hide my head! And then what would become of the dining?" The Governor must have a dinner and he must have a wife. And hence he lay awake about it all night. At last as the morning broke he cried out to himself, "Contempt! She will say no, will she! What then? Other men have lived through it, and I shall. If not, I shall have a clear conscience about the dinner, and a clear conscience is the main thing after all! I will write a note to Miss A. any way. It may be she will regard it favorably." So the professor sat down and wrote a note to Miss A. "Stay a minute," said he to himself, what will the Governor think of the lady? She is handsome and polite, but can she converse? Can she entertain company? "Doubtful," said he to himself, "very doubtful;" and so he tore up the note. Alas! for a man on the verge of matrimony! In an hour or two, however, the Professor called on the President and said:

"I should like to be absent a few days."

"Ah!" said the President, "just at this time?"

"Yes, sir, I have my classes in readiness for the examination, and I wish to go to New York."

"Has any death occurred in the family," said the President.

"No, sir," said the Professor, "but I have a little matter of business that re-

quires my immediate attention, and I thought it best to go."

"You have my best wishes," said the President, "and may you return safely and not alone."

The Professor almost smiled, but blushed rather than smiled, and left the President, and hastened to New York.

His first inquiry on his arrival there, was for Miss Adeline G., the young lady whom he had seen some years before, at a school, as we have mentioned.

"Why," said the respondent, "the family has become reduced, and she is a cook. Perhaps you don't know it, sir?"

"A Cook!" said he, "that is just what I want!"

"Oh!" said the lady, "we thought you wanted something else possibly."

"No, I have been half starved to death since I left New York, and I want some one that can cook decently."

"Well, she can do that, for she scarcely has her equal in that line in this city. Why, sir, she is a cook, *par excellence*."

"And how does she look?"

"She is the handsomest cook in the city, too."

"Not quite that, I presume," said the Professor, "but is she intelligent? I speak confidentially."

"Intelligent! She is, indeed—she can converse like an angel."

"And as to manners. Is she accomplished?"

"As graceful as an actress."

"Couldn't I see her before that hour?"

"I think that would be the most convenient time for her to call, and to see you. She will be engaged in her duties till then."

"I will wait then. Please to tell her that Professor Mack, of Virginia, wishes to see her—an old acquaintance of hers."

"Shall I tell her that you wish to engage a cook?"

"You may tell her that I wish to see her," said the Professor.

"What name did you say?"

"Professor Mack, of Virginia, if you please, madam."

An everlasting long day was before him, and he had nothing to do; not a problem to solve, except the one in hand, and that was one of a doubtful solution.

Eight o'clock at last came, and the Professor called again to see the young lady.

"A cook, indeed!" said the Professor to himself; "she is a splendid woman fit to grace any parlor in the world!" But how in creation should he make known his business? Poets they say, begin in the middle of their story; but professors of mathematics, where do they begin! Finally said the suitor, "Miss G., how would you like to go to Virginia?"

"To Virginia!" said she as if surprised. Are you not mistaken in the person whom you wished to see?"

"No, No," said he, "don't you remember that we both attended school in Franklin street?"

"Oh," said she, "it is George Mack—I remember you well; why, I didn't know that you were alive!"

"And I have never forgotten you."

"Ah! indeed, you are very kind to remember me so long! I thought every one had forgotten me in my calamities."

"People often think they are overlooked when trials overtake them; but it is for you to say that your present trials are at an end."

"Professor Mack! what do you mean? Why I am a mere—"

"If you have had reverses I have had success, and have the means of making you comfortable in life."

"But you do not know my circumstances now, for I would not deceive you, George."

"It does not concern me what you are now, but what you are willing to be."

"But I have an aged mother, Professor."

"And I wish to have one; she can go, too."

Matters were soon arranged as to time, place, and ceremony, and this being over the party were off to Virginia—the Professor pleased that he had solved the matrimonial problem so easily, and the lady that she was no longer at the world's bidding.

In the country of Virginia great ado is made for a newly married couple. Of course much was expected in the case of the Professor. But some "bird in the air" carried the story in advance, that Professor Mack had married a cook! What lady then would call upon her? What society could the F. F. V's of Virginia have with a cook? But the President advised his wife to call upon her out of decency at least. If the Professor had married a cook, why, he didn't know any better. All that he knew was how to solve problems in mathematics. Besides, he might not have married a cook, or if he had he was well

off in one respect—he could have a good table.

"Pshaw!" said the President's lady, "what does a person care about a table in comparison with caste in society?"

"Caste in society will do well enough," he replied, "but since we must eat to live, a well roasted turkey is better than a fried chicken; and a short biscuit than an ashcake! And what does an epicure care for ceremony? A good cup of coffee is better."

"You are no Virginian, husband, otherwise, you would never say that, for anybody knows that nobility in a log cabin is better than a cook in a palace!"

"Well, call on the lady and see—theories are often good for nothing, while practice is the sum of perfection!"

The Presidentess called and was amazed—the cook was much her superior—and she felt it.

The other officers' ladies having heard that the President's wife had called on Mrs. Mack, were obliged according to custom to follow suit. They, too, were disappointed, for the New York lady hadn't lived in a city in vain. In mind, in manners, in accomplishments, she outranked them all! Besides, in respect to family she was not at all inferior—her father having had fortune once and lost it.

Commencement day was now near at hand, and the great dining was to come off at the Professor's. Nor was Mrs. Mack at all disconcerted about it. She had seen a thing or two before; and was fully confident in her own ability to meet the exigency.

When the time arrived, all eyes were fixed on Mrs. Mack. How would she appear in the presence of the Governor of Virginia? How in the presence of the Professors and the President? And what sort of a table would she set, and how would she grace it? Could she go through it with dignity?

Of course all this was enough "to try men's souls," but Mrs. Mack was perfectly at home.

In etiquette—in conversation—in the arrangement of all the circumstantialia and in the formalities of the occasion she showed herself equal to the duties devolving upon her, and evidently interested the Governor very much by her powers of conversation.

"What a charming lady," said he to his wife, "is Mrs. Mack! and what a table she has set! and how well she graces it!"

"My dear husband," said she,—"Do you know she is a New York cook—why, she has been a mere servant for many years!"

"I know nothing about that," said he, "but if she has; I wish every other lady was a servant and a New York cook, too. We should have something to eat then, my dear, besides fried chickens and ashcakes!"

"All men are not epicures, like you, Governor."

"No—but if they were they would imitate the mathematical Professor, and go to New York to get a wife. A man wouldn't be compelled then to go to a saloon to get a decent dinner! He could find one at home—now a great rarity."

THE WORTH OF COURTESY.

A few years ago, on a radiant spring afternoon, two men, who, from their conversation, appeared to be foreigners, stopped before the gate of one of our large workshops in Boston for the manufacture of locomotive engines. Entering a small office, the elder of the two men inquired of the superintendent in attendance if he would permit them to inspect the works.

"You can pass in and look about, if you please," said the superintendent, vexed apparently, at being interrupted in the perusal of his newspaper. He then scanned the two strangers more closely. They were respectably but plainly dressed, and evidently made no pretensions to official dignity of any kind.

"Is there any one who can show us over the establishment, and explain matters to us?" asked Mr. Wolfe, the elder of the strangers.

"You must pick your own way, gentlemen," replied the superintendent; "we are all too busy to attend to every party that comes along. I'll thank you not to interrupt the workmen by asking questions."

It was not so much the matter as the manner of his reply that was offensive to Mr. Wolfe and his companion. It was spoken with a certain official assumption of superiority, mingled with contempt for the visitors, indicating a haughty and selfish temper.

"I think we will not trouble you," said Mr. Wolfe, bowing; and taking his companion's arm, they passed out.

"If there is anything I dislike it is in-

civility," said Mr. Wolfe to his companion, who they were in the street. "I do not blame the man for not wishing to see us of the establishment; he is no doubt annoyed and interrupted by many heedless visitors; but he might have dismissed us with courtesy. He might have sent us away better content with a gracious refusal than with an ungracious consent."

"Perhaps we shall have better luck here," said the other stranger, and they stopped before another workshop of a similar kind. They were received by a brisk little man, the head clerk, apparently, who, in reply to their request to be shown over the establishment, answered, "Oh, yes, come with me, gentlemen; this way." So saying he hurried them along the area strewn with iron bars, broken and rusty wheels of iron, fragments of old cylinders, into the principal workshop. Here, without stopping to explain any one thing, he led the strangers along with the evident intention of getting rid of them as soon as possible. When they paused where the workmen were riveting the external castings of a boiler, the clerk looked at his watch, tapped his foot against an iron tube, and showed other signs of impatience. Whereupon Mr. Wolfe remarked, "We will not detain you any longer, sir," and with his friend took leave.

"This man is an improvement on the other," said Mr. Wolfe; "but all the civility he has is on the surface; it does not come from the heart. We must look further."

The strangers walked on for nearly half a mile in silence, when one of them pointed to a picture of a locomotive engine with a train of cars underneath. It overtopped a small building not more than ten feet in height, communicating with a yard and workshop.

"Look," said the observer, "here is a machinist whose name is not on our list."

"Probably it was thought too small a concern for our purpose," said his companion.

"Nevertheless, let us try it," said Mr. Wolfe.

They entered and found at the desk a middle-aged man, whose somewhat grimy aspect, and apron round his waist, showed that he divided his labors between the workshop and the counting-room.

"We want to look over your works, if you have no objections."

"It will give me great pleasure to show you all there is to be seen," said the mechanic with a pleased alacrity, ringing a bell, and telling the boy who entered to take charge of the office. He then led the way and explained to the strangers the whole process of constructing a locomotive engine. He showed them how the various parts of the machinery were manufactured, and patiently answered all their questions. He told them of an improved mode of tubing boilers, by which the power of generating steam was increased, and showed with what care he provided for security from bursting. Two hours passed away. The strangers were delighted with the intelligence displayed by the mechanic, and with his frank, attentive, and unsuspicious manners.

"Here is a man who loves his profession so well, that he takes pleasure in explaining its mysteries to all who can understand them," thought Mr. Wolfe.

"I am afraid we have given you a good deal of trouble!" said the other stranger.

"Indeed, gentlemen, I have enjoyed your visit," said the mechanic, "and shall be glad to see you again."

"Perhaps you may," said Mr. Wolfe, and the strangers departed.

Five months afterwards, as the mechanic, whose means were quite limited, sat in his office, meditating how hard it was to get business by the side of such large establishments as were his competitors, the two strangers entered. He gave them a hearty welcome, handed chairs, and sat down.

"We come," said Mr. Wolfe, "with a proposition from the Emperor of Russia."

"From the Emperor? Impossible!"

"Here are our credentials."

"But, gentlemen," said the now agitated mechanic, "what does this mean? How have I earned such an honor?"

"Simply by your straightforward courtesy and frankness, combined with professional intelligence," said Mr. Wolfe. "Because we were strangers, you did not think it necessary to treat us with distrust or coolness. You saw we were in earnest in acquainting ourselves with your works, and did not ask before extending to us your civilities, what letters of introduction we brought. You measured us by the spirit we showed, and not by the dignities we could have exhibited."