

## MAIDENS AND WIVES.

"Why was I ever married?"  
Sighing the young wife cried.  
"Why, ere my eighteenth summer,  
Did I become a bride?"

"Why did I not pause and linger  
Where the 'brook and river meet?"  
Instead of rushing onwards  
With giddy, heedless feet.

"But now, ah me! a woman  
With all a mother's cares  
Has no time left for dreaming  
A maiden's hopes and fears.

"Instead of the girl's sweet musings,  
Of a future ever bright,  
My future is settled already—  
'Tis work from morning till night.

"I must never be merry nor girlish,  
Nor aught undignified do,  
Because I'm a married woman,  
Yet I'm only twenty-two!"

\* \* \* \* \*

But now the wife's musings are ended,  
Her husband's form she can see,  
"Why, Kate, dear, what have you been doing?  
Come, bustle, and get the tea.

"Wife, you remember the story  
Of your school-fellow, Jenny Kaime;  
Last night beneath the river  
She hid her sorrow and shame.

"Oh, Paul," the wife said, sobbing,  
As she hid her face on his breast,  
"Thank God, in this sweet strong shelter,  
I so early found a rest.

"And I hope that our little Minnie  
May marry early too—  
That is, if she finds a husband  
As loving, dear Paul, as you.

"For though sweet are a maiden's visions,  
'Tis sweeter and safer to be  
The wife of a true, fond husband,  
As you are, my darling, to me." R. B.  
—Golden Era.

## A FIGHT FOR A LOCOMOTIVE.

## I.

I sat at breakfast one autumn morning, lazily sipping my coffee, and trying to solve a problem that completely eclipsed the *pons asinorum*. Certainly that proposition never caused half the perplexity the one I was now cogitating did. The morning paper lay uncut across my knee; the rolls had gone cold; the sunshine came in through the open window, bringing with it the scent of the late roses; and across the road and the adjacent meadows came the shouts of the harvestmen gathering in the last loads of wheat from the distant cornfields. Yet I was blind to the fair prospect that was visible from the window of my pretty suburban lodging, and opened out into the clear, fresh air of the morning, and stretched for miles on miles; green meadows, yellow stubbles, red farmhouses, and woods already touched with the marvelous colors laid on so lavishly, and yet harmoniously, by the master-hand of autumn; bounded by the distant line of hills over which hung the rounded outline of the Wrekin, only distinguishable from a cloud by its immobility. Many and oft were the hours I had spent in watching and drinking in all the beauty of earth, and tree, and sky; and why not on this particular morning? The immediate cause lay in two letters that lay on the table. One had a narrow pink envelop of that elongated form so much affected by the fair sex. The other was an unmistakable business letter, addressed in a clerkly hand to William Herbert, Esq., Paradise Place, Metal-town.

"PLACE AUX DAMES—MY DEAREST WILLIE; \* \* And I really don't see that we need be in any hurry to be married. We have only been engaged a year. You are only twenty-two, and I am but nineteen; so we are quite young enough to wait sometime longer yet. Although grandma is a little queer, yet I can bear with her easily when I think of the great happiness that is in store for us *sometime*. Certainly, dear, we might manage it, as you are so impatient, if, when your uncle's will is opened, you have the £30 annuity you expect; but if you don't get it, your salary of £120 is rather small to manage with. I think, darling, we had better wait a bit. Am I not a terribly worldly-wise little thing?" &c.,

This letter was signed "Mary."

Of course I had read her letter first, and had inwardly resolved upon overcoming her fears and getting married off hand. But the second letter put a damper on my hopes. It was from my uncle's solicitor, and ran thus:

"DEAR SIR—The six months your deceased relative directed his will to be

kept sealed were up yesterday, and the will was read by me before several of his relatives. I am desired to make you acquainted with the contents, and enclose you copy of will. You will see that, contrary to our expectations, the will, which your uncle himself made, and kept sealed even from me, does not leave you a penny. I am astonished at this unaccountable conduct, and am grieved at your disappointment. I am, sir, yours faithfully,

"J. H. PROCTOR."

My bright hopes were banished, and it was with a sorrowful heart that I came to the conclusion that there was nothing to do but to wait as patiently as possible. Suddenly awakening to the factor that I was half an hour late for the office, I hastened toward, inwardly praying that my principal, a large contract, had not arrived. As soon as I entered, however, the chief clerk said to me, "Mr. Herbert, you are wanted in Mr. Heywood's room." I hurried in, feeling defiantly careless of the expected reprimand.

"Good morning, Mr. Herbert, you are late."

"I have had unwelcome news, sir, and forgot how the time was passing." And I told him as much as I thought proper. After some discursive talk, he said:

"I have been well pleased with your business tact and energy, Mr. Herbert, and have sent for you now to undertake a rather ticklish matter. Oblige me by listening while I put you in possession of the facts."

"You know we have discontinued working the Lleydem brick-fields; and it appears that our late manager has allowed the royalty to Earl — to fall into arrears for two years. Last week a distraint was made on the premises, and the engine that used to run on our branch line, and was lying in the shed, has been seized and sold for about a quarter of its value. The purchaser has run it a little up the line off our land, and taken up the rails behind it to prevent its being taken back. Now, I consider that such a distress is illegal, and I am determined to seek the remedy known in the law as 'recaption.' I do not care for the bother of a replevin act. Now, I want you to go to Lleydem and see how the land lies, and then take as many men as you want from the Mynedd lead mines, together with horses, and pull the engine on the main line after the night mail has passed, and take her with all haste to Nantyglyn station in time to meet the up luggage train at half-past two in the morning. You will then attach the engine to the train and bring her here. Here is the necessary permit to authorize you to stop the train, and a letter to the captain of the mine. If, as is quite possible, you meet with resistance, refrain from using any more force than is necessary. I wish to avoid any fighting. If you conduct this matter successfully, it is quite probable I may raise your salary, for I have been well satisfied with your conduct in the office. Are you quite sure that you perfectly comprehend my instructions?"

I withdrew to make the necessary preparations and cogitate about my anticipated good fortune, and the strange service I was engaged upon. It had all the charm of adventure, for I was not so sanguine as to hope that such a proceeding could be taken entirely without resistance. I determined to say nothing about it to Mary, lest she should be alarmed. I wrote her a short note, saying that I should be away on important business for the next two or three days, and urging her to keep a good heart, as I might have some good news to tell her when we next met.

## II.

I alighted at Nantyglyn station, and engaged a room at the sole inn the village boasted of. It was still early in the evening, and I started after dinner to walk as far as Lleydem, a distance of about two miles, to reconnoitre. The road ran along the hill-side nearly all the way. A shower had laid the dust, and the wet foliage of the trees that clung to the rock on my right hand, and overhung the path, gleamed lightly in the dying light. Far down on my left ran the brawling river, just colored with the rain, and from all about arose the soft steam from the moistened earth, speaking eloquently in its grave-like odor of the sad end of the year that was coming so quickly. Autumn is pleasant enough amid the gardens of Kent, but very sad is it among the hills. The trees are stunted, and the leaves soon flutter slowly downward from their baring branches; and those who have only heard the musical sighing of the wind through the trees of a lowland landscape, can have no conception of the weird-like feeling that steals over one as

he listens to the sighing of the gale among the swaying and creaking boughs of the mountain pines and birches, and its fiercer shriek as it sweeps up the ravines and over the desolate moor. The wind was rising, laden with occasional showers, as I reached the brick-field. The state of affairs was worse than I had imagined. The engine had been left on an exposed part of the line, and where there was a sharp curve, causing the outside rail to be much higher than the other. Inclining at such a sharp angle, it had been exposed to the full fury of a recent gale, which, catching it at so great a disadvantage, had tilted it completely over, and it now lay on its side on the embankment, with the hindmost wheels, however, resting, or only partly off, the rails. It was a small and very light engine, and had been originally intended for the Crimea.

It was a wide and lonely place where the brick-yard was situated. It was just where the moorland commences, and where there was nothing to interrupt the eye as it roamed over the purple flat, strangely lit up in places by crimson gleams and patches of golden brown, as the light of the stormy sunset was reflected from the surface of a pool, or shone on a lighter ground of dead rushes and ling. Beyond all was a long gray line, which could not be mistaken for anything but what it was—the bonny, open sea. If you listened intently you could even catch, borne on the wind, the faint roar of the surf on the flat sandy shore.

Nothing could be done that night, and on the morrow I mounted a sorry animal, which mine host called a saddle-horse, and rode off to the mines to bespeak the services of a dozen men and three horses—all they had to spare—for 8 o'clock that night, and then back to the station to put all right with the station-master. To disarm suspicion I took a rod and made my way down to the now swollen stream. Few fish were there in it, for the deadly water from the mines had played sad havoc with the finny tribe. More time was passed in reverie than in fishing, and tender memories of the past mingled strangely with dreams of the future. How happy Mary and I could be in a little cottage *ornee* I had my eye upon, and which I knew was to be had at a low rent. How pleasant to hurry home from business, and find a bright face to welcome me with a kiss and a bonny smile, instead of my lonely bachelor rooms. Ah, me! would it ever come to pass, I wondered. Surely it must some day; and yet, somehow, I could not look hopefully forward. Perhaps it was the lowering weather, and the dull, spiritless air that everybody wore that depressed me; and it was absurd, yet I felt as if I were going to be hung, or meet with some serious accident in this midnight abduction I was engaged in. Vainly trying to shake off the feeling, I retraced my steps to the inn.

At 8 o'clock it was already quite dark. When I reached the bank over the line I saw that the men, by the light of lanterns, had rigged up a temporary crane, and were tugging away at the ropes, trying to raise the fallen engine, and prying away with levers and screw-jacks, working quietly and well. Most of them were brawny Englishmen, imported by Mr. Heywood; the rest were Welshmen, smaller made, but wiry and strong. Steadily the work went on under my directions, and all the while a soft, unpleasant drizzle gradually soaked us through and through. The wind was fitful, and many and mysterious were the sounds that it brought out of the glens. It moaned dismally through the pine woods, showing that the spirit of the storm was abroad, and ere long would be upon us in all its savageness. Suddenly a form flitted by, then another, and another, and three strange men passed by the engine and vanished in the gloom. Other eyes were as quick as mine, and saw them. We instinctively knew that they were the vanguard of the enemy, and that soon we might expect opposition. As we afterward learned, one of the men at the mine had not been able to keep the secret from his Delilah.

"Look sharp, lads, and get her on the line before they come," I cried, and lent a hand to the ropes myself. At last, with a thud, she was righted, and then the screw-jacks were again applied to lift her properly on the rails. This was done without interruption. The horses were harnessed to, and she began to move merrily enough, though a rattling noise inside made it evident that some of her machinery was broken. I was beginning to hope that we might soon gain the main line, about half a mile away, when over the bank there came

some twenty or thirty men and lads. The wheels were scotched before we could prevent it. They harnessed a couple of horses and half a dozen donkeys to the other end of the engine. Two tar barrels they had brought with them were set alight, and blazed furiously, affording plenty of light. I warned my men not to have recourse to violence, and in this I was seconded by the leader of the opposite side, who was, in fact, the purchaser of the engine.

"It shall be a fair fight," he said. "Let us see who can pull the hardest now, and you take your chance in the law afterward."

By mutual consent we unscotched the wheels, and the tournament began. First one party gained a few yards, then the other. The animals lugged their very hardest, aided by the men. The Englishmen were the strongest, although the fewest in number, but the incline was in favor of the Welshmen, and at first it seemed as if they would triumph and drag the engine back to where the rails were broken up. No blows passed between us, and the good humor shown by every one surprised me very much. I felt that I was losing patience, and must have some hand in it, so I took up a lever, and, inserting it behind a wheel, strove to urge it onward. My friend, the commander-in-chief of the enemy, did the same, but in an opposite direction. What was to be done? Things must rapidly end in a free fight. Nobody's patience could stand it much longer. The sons of Cambria in particular were becoming excited, and one or two stones had already struck the engine, thrown by some outsider in the darkness. The mail had passed some time ago, and the luggage train was nearly due. If the struggle continued much longer the neighborhood would be aroused, and we should stand no chance. At all risks the engine must be carried away before daylight. As soon as one side gained an advantage the wheels were scotched by the other, and a dead-lock seemed inevitable. A bright idea struck me, and, abandoning my lever, I went up to the overseer of the mine, who was working as hard as any of them, and asked him who was the best runner among the men.

"There will be none as good as you, sir; and they be all tired with this pulley-hauling work."

"Well, then, I'm off to Nantyglyn station; and I'll come back with the engine of the luggage train. Do you see? Look to the points at the junction."

"Capital, sir!" exclaimed he, as I turned and dashed over the bank and into the narrow road. I had scarcely got out of the glare of the fire when I was roughly collared by somebody. As he was evidently not a friend, and there was no time for explanation, even if I wished to give any, I placed my hand over his shoulder, and my arm under his chin, and, with a sudden wrench, taught me by a Welsh collier, forced his head back, and left him half insensible on the ground.

That was a run!—along a rutty, stony road, and the night, or rather morning, pitch dark. It was tolerable good running that covered the two miles in a quarter of an hour, and I was thoroughly puffed as I got into the station. The train had been waiting a few minutes, and, although it was exceeding my power, I took the responsibility on myself of detaching the engine, and going forward along the line. The junction was soon reached, a lantern held up showed us that all was clear, and we steamed stowly up to the engine. Both parties had drawn off their forces, and were sitting and standing in groups, a little apart, while rude chaff was freely interchanged. The firelight cast long and wavering shadows around, and made the outer darkness look blacker and more impenetrable than ever. The rain still came steadily down and hissed on the blazing fires, while the wet ground was trodden ankle deep in mud.

Such a yell arose, after the first astonished silence, from our opponents, answered by a ringing cheer from my men. The cattle were quickly unloosed and ridden off out of the way by three men. The ropes were quickly transferred to the big engine, and in the midst of a general *melee* the two locomotives moved slowly off, dragging their horses and donkeys backward. Seeing the uselessness of employing brute force against steam, they cut their ropes, and we moved triumphantly off, followed by a volley of oaths and stones. One of the latter struck me on the cheek, laying it open and knocking me back on the coals in the tender. It was as much as I could do to restrain my men from jumping off and charging them.

Well, that is how I fought for and won the locomotive. I do not know,