

A RECLUSE.

GEORGE PAUNCEFORT, A MISSING ACTOR,

AND HOW HE WAS FOUND IN JAPAN SURROUNDED BY A FAMILY OF THIRTEEN WIVES.

Some years ago George Pouncefort was a celebrated actor in this country, and particularly celebrated as John Mildmay, in the play Still Waters Run Deep, and years ago Pouncefort disappeared from the gaze of the American people, and perhaps nobody that knew him would ever have known what had become of him had it not been for Joseph Arthur, now in Cleveland as the agent for Willie Edouin's Sparks Company.

A Herald man had a conversation with Mr. Arthur, in which he related the singular manner and the singular place in which he found Pouncefort. "I found him," said Mr. Arthur, "away back in the interior of beautiful Japan. He had thirteen wives—natives—and seemed to be happy in the possession of a charming tea plantation."

"How did you discover him?" asked the reporter.

"It was purely incidental. Three other persons and myself went inland to visit the celebrated prehistoric statue of Buddha, at Diabusta. We traveled by moonlight in the only conveyance in that country, a sort of perambulator, hauled by the natives. At midnight the moon was hidden by clouds; in a short time we found ourselves in the midst of a storm and sought shelter under the eaves of the first house we came to. The climate was mild and being weary we fell asleep. Daylight revealed a charming scene. The house, I could liken to nothing but a large bird cage, was in the midst of the undulating rice fields, intersected at regular spaces by little narrow streams of water, kissed by the overhanging branches of bush and tree, and spanned by numerous fairy-like bridges—a place in fact, that recalled youthful Fairy land to my mind.

"The owner of this house and these lands was George Pouncefort, the English actor, whose playing had been witnessed by audiences in all the large cities of the United States, and some of your old theatre-goers here may remember him."

"And what took this man to Japan?" inquired the reporter.

"That," said Mr. Arthur, "is something of a mystery. He is now an octogenarian and something of a recluse. When I saw him he stepped to his door in the early morning clad in a semi-Japanese garb, with long, flowing footings and calash. He wore no shoes. His form was erect, his hair and mustache snowy white, his countenance of a florid hue. "He did not seem to be either glad or sorry to see us, and we rather invited ourselves in. And as he stood so silent and grave I mentally said, 'John Mildmay' Behind him stood his wife. You have asked me," said Mr. Arthur, "why he was found in such an out-of-the-way corner of the globe? I cannot answer that directly, but I think domestic difficulties drove him there. It was alleged that he had two wives previous to going away—one in London and one in San Francisco. At all events, he was a great admirer of the fair sex, and after disappearing was not heard from until I found him in Japan."

"How did he treat you?"

"When we went into the house he only uttered three words: 'My wives, gentlemen;' but during our stay did not in the presence of the other parties express an opinion on any subject, or join in the conversation; but subsequently I had a private conversation with him, in which he told me many things regarding his past life, probably because he was a Mason and discovered I was one. He came to this country from England in 1857, and made a great reputation as an actor. When the trouble referred to occurred, he started for the Orient as chief officer of a merchant vessel and the vessel was wrecked off the island of Formosa, near the northern coast of China. He was rescued by the natives, who were not absolute Chinese, but a sort of hybrid race, a cross between the Chinese and Koreans, and were exceedingly savage, so much so that had it not been for a Hollander who had located there, and become friendly with Pouncefort would not have escaped with his life.

"This Hollander was engaged on the island, extracting dyes from the different woods there, and interced-

ed for Pouncefort when the natives proposed to kill him.

"Leaving this inhospitable island he went to Japan, and landed there without money or friends, having no knowledge of the language or the customs of the country, a lone son of Thespis from afar and with his heart bowed down with a weight of woe. At that time there was no treaty between the countries, and the Japanese took no stock in foreigners. However, Pouncefort felt that he had come to stay. He was a man of fact and intelligence, and at once set about acquiring the language, in the meantime sustaining himself by writing sketches of the Europeans and having them translated. Subsequently he learned the language well enough to go through the country lecturing. He knew something of medicine, and when lecturing failed him he took to doctoring, and jestingly said to me that he believed he had succeeded in his medical career in Japan in killing three or four hundred people. Finally he joined a band of native actors, assuming with great power some of the leading roles in the Japanese drama, which he pronounces superior in cunning development of plot and sublimity of language to either the French or German dramas. Thrice he assumed in the native tongue the role of Yura, the hero of the historical drama of Japan, a character analogous to our Hamlet, and played before the Mikado. As a result of the performance he received unstinted praise from the writers and poets of that country. At his suggestion I was led to secure a translation of the play which is entitled Ronins, and it will be produced in this country next season."

"Why did he retire to the tea plantation and get married so multitudinously?" asked the Herald man.

"His acting led to an accession of wealth and fame. He then came to the conclusion to settle down and sealed to himself a wife—a beautiful Japanese woman—of what is known as the Daimo, noble, or the long nosed class. "They are as white in complexion as any European, and noted for their beauty. He then bought a tea and rice plantation, and when I visited him he was employing about 150 or 200 laborers, and living a life of ease and luxury. He accumulated his other wives by degrees, I presume, but all the women seemed to be getting along without domestic jars. At all events, Pouncefort has had an experience few Englishmen have had, and, what is more, seems inclined to stay in his Asiatic home."

"MAID-OF-ALL-WORK."

Rachel Ramsay looked very pretty, indeed as she came down the narrow wooden staircase in the little brown farm house that afternoon dressed in a white muslin dress, strewn all over with tiny pink rosebuds, and a fresh face frill around her neck, tied with pink ribbon, while her pretty feet were buttoned into a new pair of boots, with high French heels, and her hair was curled in loose, glossy coils of shining bronze.

"Eh!" said Granny Ramsay, looking up from her everlasting knitting-work, over which she was half asleep; "go in, to church hey?"

"It isn't Sunday, grandma," explained the girl, laughing and coloring. "I'm going to the Tower, to see Miss Calhoun. She has often invited me there—she and Miss Bell."

"Pshaw!" said Granny Ramsay, who was one of those venerable people privileged to speak their minds of all occasions; "what do the fine city ladies at the Tower want of a farmer's daughter like you?"

"But, grandma, they've invited me!"

"It reminds me," said grandma, shrewdly, "of the old story of the iron pot and the china pot swimming down stream together and they don't nowise suit."

Rachel said no more, but escaped into the shady lane, where the maples were beginning to turn pale yellow in the first September frosts. "Grandma is always criticising everybody," she thought. "I know the ladies at the Tower will be glad to see me. Miss Alice wants to sketch my head for 'Elaine,' and Miss Bell asked me to sing duets with her. She said I had a voice like a lark. And perhaps Mr. Harold Haroldson will be there! For I know he often visits at the house."

And Rachel smiled to herself, as she crossed the rustic bridge and went through the woods to the

Tower, a fantastic wooden cottage with a semi-circular front, which was let for the summer. The owner thereof preferring to live in a square brick structure in the village.

The little side door was open and Rachel went in. From the left of the passage-way, a door opened into the kitchen, and there, to her infinite amazement, she saw Miss Alice Calhoun herself, in the aesthetic dress of pale sage-green, and roses in her hair, contemplating a pair of decapitated fowls which lay on the table.

"Miss Alice!" she exclaimed.

"Is that you, Rachel," cried the city young lady, pouncing on her as a drowning man pounces on the nearest floating straw. "Oh, I never was so glad to see anybody in all my life! These horrid hens! Bridget has gone away in a rage because I presumed to find fault with the coffee this morning, and we have got company to dinner, and I haven't an idea how to get the feathers of these creatures. But now that you are here, everything will be right!"

And she shook off the big bib-apron, and stepped back with a sigh of relief.

Rachel looked perplexed. She had come there, not to enact the roll of the kitchen maid, but to visit Miss Calhoun, to sit in her drawing room and enjoy the conversation of her guests, and she did not exactly relish this summary dismissal to the kitchen.

"There is soup stock," went on Miss Alice, "and a salad, and a delicate piece of halibut, and with the fowls roasted, and a pie or a pudding, or something which I dare say you can make, we shall do very nicely. I'm particularly anxious about the dinner, because we are to have company. You'll excuse me now because I have to dress."

And away tripped Miss Alice, self-fish and smiling as ever was Queen Cleopatra's self.

Poor Rachel! She stood a minute in the hot kitchen, the tears springing to her eyes, a pang of disappointment at her heart. She knew all about it. Harold Haroldson and Mr. Dallas were to dine there that day, she—she was to be cook, waitress, maid of all work—what signified it what she called herself? She remembered what grandma had said, and for once in her life gave that venerable lady credit for discrimination.

There was no help for it, however. She tied on the bib-apron, tucked the curls back of her ears, and went to work to prepare the chickens for the roasting pan, now and then pausing to brush away the round bright tears which rolled down her cheeks.

These young ladies evidently intended to make her useful. She might have known that they did, beforehand. She could hear the soft sound of Bell Calhoun's guitar; the sweet, subdued tinkle of Alice's laughter; the deep, monotonous under-current of gentlemen's voices; and then she glanced down at her pretty muslin dress and bows of pink ribbon, and began to think that Miss Calhoun had taken an unfair advantage of her.

If she could only have heard the rapid and energetic colloquy which transpired between the two sisters in their dressing room when first Alice came up stairs, she would perhaps have better comprehended the drift of things.

"Good news!" Miss Calhoun had cried, waving her scented pocket-handkerchief in the air. "I've got a girl in the kitchen!"

"No!" said Miss Bell, a fair haired, cream complexion damsel, with pale blue eyes and a perpetual smile.

"Rachel Ramsey," nodded Alice, "came up in her best bib and tucker, to spend the day. Of course I confiscated her at once."

"The bold, pushing thing!" said Bell, with a disdainful gesture.

"She's a deal too pretty to bring into the drawing room for Haroldson and Armine Dallas to flirt with," added Miss Alice, knowingly. "And I don't see any way that I could have avoided it, if it had not been for those lucky chickens, and Bridget's fortunate fit of temper. Make haste, now; they'll be here in a minute. And I know little Rachel is a first-class cook, for I've been there to tea."

So the young ladies of the Tower were enjoying the feast of reason and the flow of soul in their cool drawing-room, with books, new gathered roses and blue-ribboned guitars, while poor Rachel Ramsay was broiling in the kitchen over peach tarts and Neapolitan creams.

She had forgotten her disappointment; but, artist-like, she had thrown herself into her occupation with engrossing interest, and she was stirring the creams with a quick, energetic hand, when a step crossed the threshold.

"Here are some fresh trout, Bridget, to surprise your mistress," said a clear voice.

And to her infinite amazement, Harold Haroldson stood before her, in his hunting costume, with a fishing rod lightly balanced on his shoulder.

"I'm not Bridget," said the girl laughing but still stirring on; "I'm Rachel."

"Miss Ramsay!" he exclaimed, lifting his cap. "How in the name of all that is wonderful came you here?"

And then, not without humor, Rachel detailed the manner and incidents of her capture.

"I am the maid-of-all-work, if you please," she said, with a curtsy.

"Then let me help you," said Haroldson, briskly tying a second bib apron around his hunting suit.

"I used to be a pretty good hand at spider and gridiron when I camped out on Lake Capsuptic, up in Maine."

But you're not engaged," said Rachel, half-pleased, half-frightened.

"I can volunteer," observed the young man. "Give me the oil and vinegar, and you will see what a dressing a la mayonnaise. I can provide for that salad of yours."

And if ever a pair of cooks spent a delightful, unconventional sort of morning in the kitchen this pair did.

They laughed, they made innocent jokes, they behaved like two school children.

And at last when Rachel ran out into the garden to gather some water cresses to deck the newly roasted fowls. Mr. Haroldson heard the voice of Miss Bell Calhoun calling down the stairway:

"Rachel! Rachel! you may serve the dinner. Every one is here but that tiresome Haroldson!"

"And he's here, too," calmly responded that gentleman, who was washing his hands at the pump.

"What!" cried Bell, shrilly.

"The cook and butler are expected to take their meals in the kitchen," said Mr. Haroldson, with commendable gravity. "And I've no objection to that arrangement."

And nothing could induce Harold Haroldson to come up to the dining room. He and Rachel together ate their picnicking sort of repast, and washed the dishes—although the matter somewhat lost its spice when the Misses Calhoun and their company all adjourned, en masse to the kitchen, and persisted in joining their ranks.

And when the purple sunset came dreamily down over the dark cedars that overhung the brawling stream, and the gay guests had all departed, Alice and Bell Calhoun gazed dubiously at each other.

"Was ever anything so provoking," said Bell.

"He has actually gone home with her," said Alice bursting into angry tears.

"And after all the pains we took to keep them apart!" sighed Bell.

"It was all your fault," petulantly exclaimed Alice. "Noticing that farmer's daughter, and dragging her out of her sphere in that sort of way!"

"But it was you that plumed yourself on getting her into the kitchen!" scolded Bell. "And a nice mess you've made of it!"

"But how were we to tell that it was going to end so?" groaned poor Alice.

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"Well, Rachel," said Granny Ramsay, when the girl came in, just as the lamps were lighted, "what sort of a day did you have?"

"Humph!" grunted Granny. "That's a queer way of entertaining visitors. But p'raps that's city manners."

"Perhaps it is," said Rachel, demurely.

"Who was it came home with you," asked Granny, who was not quite deaf or blind as yet, "and left you at the garden gate?"

"One of the other servants," said Rachel.

"Well, I never," said Granny. "Where's all your pride, Rachel Ramsay?"

"I never was prouder in all my life than I am to-night!" said Rachel. "Listen, grandma, for I have so much to tell you. Mr. Harold Haroldson, of New York, walked home with me; and I've met him ever so many times before this summer, at picnics, and archery parties, and such places, but I never knew that

he cared for me. And to-night he asked me to marry him, and he is to come here to-morrow morning to see father.

"Do you love him?" said Granny Ramsay, huskily.

And Rachel answered:

"Yes!"

"Then God bless you, my child, and give you both a long and happy life!" said the old lady, softly smoothing the girl's bright head.

And every one was satisfied, except the ladies of the Tower.—

Helen Forrest Graves.

A BIG SHRINKAGE.

THE following from the Boston Globe refers without doubt to a well known "Liberal" gentleman of this city, who took a trip to the East with a friend whose averdupois was not much different to his own. He was formerly in business not a hundred miles from First South Street, but has lately sold out and retired.

"Eating is largely a matter of habit. None of us need more than half the food we eat." The speaker was a gentleman from Salt Lake City, now visiting professional friends in Boston. The interviewer, just from the table, where he had dined too heartily, perhaps felt the force of the remark more just at that time than he would at most any other. "No; I've no desire to be interviewed. I don't care to be presented to the public as a monstrosity, but I have been remarkably successful in decreasing the amount of my flesh, which had become a burden to me."

"Something after the Banting system, or did you take any of the 'anti-fat' remedies so common?"

I discounted Banting, following a much more rigid course. You see," said the gentleman, with a self-satisfactory chuckle, "it came about this way. I am only five feet seven inches high, with bones as small as those of a woman, and two years ago I measured fifty-eight inches about the waist, twenty-four inches round the neck—"

"Gracious, what a collar!" interjected the interviewer.

"Well, it wasn't a neck exactly. My head set in a chunk of fat on my shoulders. That's about all there was to my neck. One night, after having surveyed myself in the mirror and thinking what an ungainly piece of flesh I was, I went to bed and had a dream that I was sought for by a circus man, who had been successful in exhibiting curiosities in a side-show. The next day I thought more about it and determined to get rid of some of the 270 pounds of flesh I had; just as hard, solid flesh as your ever saw. Food assimilated with my system nicely, you see, and I ate enough for two men at a meal. I began at once. Two meals a day, eight in the morning and four in the afternoon. What did I eat? Beefsteak principally, six to eight ounces at a meal, with two ounces of bread toasted hard. Nothing else! Except an occasional change to mutton, but no vegetables, no pork, no yeast."

"And for drinks?"

"No water, except in sips. Fleishy persons always are tempted to drink large quantities of water. Now, let them sip their water, and it will soon become insipid, (no pun intended) and will quench their thirst just as well. I usually drank a cup of tea without milk or sugar."

"Didn't you grow hungry at first?"

"Hungry? Well, I had always dined with Dives, on the best I could get, and looked forward to my dinner as the great delight of the day. Now I was dining with Lazarus. Yes, I suffered a good deal from hunger at the outset—a hack at the swill barrel would have been a luxury. You see, I began by trying my diet at the family table, right at the midst of temptation, but I soon had to give that up. My wife weighed my meals every day and served them to me in a separate room. I ate what was set before me, and had to be content. Hungry? Well, I've seen the time during my dieting that I would have robbed the support of a man with a wife and fourteen children to get a square meal."

"What encouragement did you get?"

"Well, I weighed myself every morning, and, now, here, no one can successfully diet to reduce flesh unless he weighs himself regularly. When I began to see that I was re-