

and mind this, I hate to hear any one drone like a school-girl. Go over there into the corner of the window, and stand there. Take that book; you'll find the mark left in where Miss Belleville—bah! I believe her name was Stubbs, and her father a green-grocer—left off. Now then, begin."

She pushed a lounge-chair close up to the window, and sat down with her hands in her muff, while I stood there, feeling like a school-girl, and ready to drone, as I began to read with faltering voice what happened to be Thackeray's most beautiful chapter—The death of poor old Colonel Newcome. I know my voice trembled at times, and a strange sense of choking came upon me as I went on battling, oh, so hard to read those piteous heart-stirring lines! but I was weak and suffering, I was faint with hunger and exertion, sick with that despair of hope deferred, and at last the room, with its costly furniture, seemed to swim round before me, a cold perspiration bathed my face, and with a weary sigh I caught feebly at the curtains, and then fell heavily upon the polished floor.

I have some faint memory of being lifted, and wheeled in a chair whose castors I heard chirrup, to the front of the fire, and then, as my senses began to return, I seemed to feel arms round me, and a pleasant voice saying half aloud—

"And she just lost her poor father too—to set her to read such a thing as that! I declare I'm about the wickedest, most thoughtless and unfeeling old woman under the sun."

Then there was the refreshing odour of a vinaigrette, and the sick feeling began to pass away.

"I—I beg pardon," I faltered, trying to rise.

"I beg yours, my dear," she said tenderly. "Sit still, sit still. Now then, try and drink that."

Some sherry was held to my lips, and then I was almost forced to eat a biscuit. They, however, rapidly revived me, and I found Mrs. Porter had torn off her bonnet and mantle, and was kneeling by my side.

"That's better, my dear," she said, smiling at me, as she passed her arm round me and drew me nearer to her, and kissed me in a gentle, motherly way. And now this was too much, for I was weak and hysterical. I could fight against harshness, but her tender words and ways unlocked the flood-gates of my grief, and I laid my head down and sobbed as if my heart would break.

An hour later, after she had literally forced me to partake of the breakfast that was ordered up, she sat beside me, holding my hand, and more than once I saw the tears steal down her pleasant face as she won from me, bit by bit, the story of my troubles and my bitter struggles here in town.

At last I rose to go, trembling and expectant. Would she engage me? It was more than I dared to hope.

"Sit still, my child," she said tenderly. "It has pleased God to make me—a childless, widowed woman—His steward over much wealth, and if I did not make this a home for one of His tempest-smitten lambs I should be a worse woman than I think I am. Stay with me; we shall be the best of friends."

I stayed—stayed to know her real worth and to win her motherly love—stayed to find, when John Murray returned, that his love was greater for my sister than for me, and patiently resigned my love to her, and then battled with a long illness when they had gone together to the far-off home. But every day gave me a new lesson on not judging too hastily. That is ten years since; and I am still in my peaceful, happy home, though only as companion to a lady.

GEO. MANVILLE FENN.

HOW WE MARRIED ON A SMALL INCOME.

BY A POOR MAN'S WIFE.



SUPPOSE love-stories will always be popular as long as the world lasts, and the hearts of men and women beat in unison, and recognise the fitness of each for each. But the details are often both silly and wearisome to outsiders, though every simplest word is fraught with meaning and every look eloquent to the persons most concerned.

Moreover there is a sacredness about the old, old story, and one hardly cares that it should be laid bare, or touched with light hands, or even robbed of a particle of its dewy, perfect bloom. So I shall not trouble you with any particulars of our love-tale—John's and mine—but introduce myself and my husband to your acquaintance when all the preliminary stages of loving and liking had been gone through, and the momentous question asked and answered.

My father gave his consent, not too willingly, and

perhaps would not have given it at all, had I not been the youngest of his six unmarried daughters.

My sisters intimated that it was impossible to approve of so great a mistake as giving the younger in marriage before the elders, though they gave me to understand in unequivocal terms that not one of them would have taken my John as a gift, poor as a church mouse as he was, and a *nobody* into the bargain. But sorely as they tried me I held my peace, though he was all the world to me, for if I had ever given way to bandying hard words with them, there would have been a great gulf set between us, as I was not the kind of girl who could quarrel and snarl, and then kiss and be good friends again as if nothing had happened. We lived in a rambling, roomy old house called Thirlton Priory, and my father, the Rev. Keith Elton, was lord of the manor as well as rector of the parish, which was a family living. Margaret, his first-born, was getting pretty well on in years, for she had been the eldest of several little steps when the only son

was born; and I, being the youngest of the half-dozen of girls, had never been considered a personage of any importance till John came upon the scene, except by mother, dear mother, who to the very end cherished and petted me, and thought me always a child. And had she lived to this day, I trust that I might ever have had the spirit of a little child to her.

My husband that was to be came first to Thirlton as Frank's friend, a good steady fellow who kept our versatile brother out of mischief, as only a young man who is honest and true without being a prig can keep his chosen companion and friend. And here let me observe that the love of man to man is a wonderful thing, "passing the love of women," as David said, where it really exists, but one of the rarest flowers that ever blossom in this nether world.

John Penfold would never have passed muster at our house had he not been a perfect gentleman, though he was only the fatherless son of a country solicitor whose widow had married again, and who had not been able to do more for her boy than give him a good education, by reason of which he passed the necessary examination and obtained a berth in Somerset House. His step-father always gave him a warm welcome, and sighed to think how unlike to John were his own boys by his first marriage, but he was too just a man to show any favouritism, or leave to his wife's son any of the property which rightly belonged to his own. He died some years after our marriage, and left each of us a legacy of £10, to buy a mourning ring, and his blessing. There were too many of us for father to do much for either, and having thus no expectations from any one, John and I had only our two selves to please and depend upon. Mother did sometimes sigh over the idea that her darling Nell would have to pinch and contrive to make both ends meet, but she thought a married life preferable to a single one, and was pleased that one of her nurselings was at length likely to make a home of her own. In so large a family there were a great many discussions over every point, but as we two had to shape our lives for ourselves, and cut our coat according to our cloth, we were obliged to be chary of receiving and acting on other people's opinions. John's income was £250, and as father promised to allow me £50 a year we thought we could manage to live, and even put a little by, though mother laughed at this idea, and told us we little knew how many ways there were for money.

Our first and chief difficulty was in the choice of an abode, and one bright morning brought a letter from my lover, saying that he had been house-hunting and should want me and one of my sisters to come up to London, and go with him to see one or two of the most eligible. Out of many he had seen was one at Hoxton, which, at the very moderate rent of £40, contained two sitting and four bed-rooms, with a comfortable kitchen and small garden. This raised a perfect storm about my ears; none of us, in the first place, knew where Hoxton was, and on reference to papa, Bradshaw, and a map of London, the fact became apparent that it was in the region familiarly known as the East End.

"You might as well think about settling in Bethnal Green at once!" exclaimed Margaret.

"You need never expect any one to come and see you there," cried several voices; and even mother said gravely that the most easterly part of London she had ever reached was the Shoreditch station, and that appeared to be in a dreadful neighbourhood. Altogether the small house at Hoxton was tabooed, and I wrote to ask John to prosecute his further researches in Bayswater or Kensington. But in those favourite suburbs no suitable dwelling could be found at a rent of less than £60, with proportionate rates and taxes, and he said very firmly that, much as he loved me, he would not make a false start and involve himself in debt for the sake of mere appearances. The end of it all was that we decided on neither choosing nor lining our nest till we were man and wife, and could be sure of seeing things from our own point of view rather than any one else's.

So we were quietly married one morning in the old church at home, without either paraphernalia or fuss, and after the usual family luncheon dear father gave John a cheque for what he considered had been saved by not having a grand wedding, towards the expenses of our honey-moon, and we drove over to Reading and there took the express train, rushing westward as far as Bristol.

At this first stage we stayed for a day or two, that my husband might show me his old school at Cotham, the Downs where he and his fellows had been wont to play cricket and football, and chase butterflies; and the lovely glades and thickets in the Leigh woods where they had gone bird-nesting, and found the early primroses, long before the suspension bridge was finished, and villas built overlooking the river. Then we pursued our happy pilgrimage to Exeter, and he took me to see the house where he was born, to call on one or two of his father's friends, and to see the cathedral, and then we journeyed on to a village on the borders of Dartmoor, where we were to stay with John's mother, Mrs. Toller.

Surely no bride was ever so blessed in her mother-in-law as I in mine; words would fail to tell of her goodness to me, her just pride in her son, or her devotion to the invalid old man, who had given such wise guidance and shown such hearty affection both to herself and John. She soon heard all our little schemes and difficulties, and took me to her heart, as if I had been her own daughter. To her I confided my private plans, and received such assistance and advice as I could never have obtained from my own mother, dear and kind as she was. For our home had always been a lavish one, and although only befitting my father's position, was by no means a good school for the education of a poor man's wife; and I did not wish to be a drag on my husband, and was determined that so far as I could help it the day should never come when poverty might enter at our doors, and love fly out at the windows. So when John was out trout-fishing or strolling with his step-father about the farm, Mrs. Toller took me into her kitchen and instructed me in the mysteries of plain roasting and boiling, taught my

unaccustomed hands to make puddings and pastry, showed me how to concoct dainty dishes by dint of good cooking out of scraps, and told me how to regulate my small supplies, so as never to have any over-stock or any leavings. And this was not all, for at my earnest request she showed me how to starch and iron laces, cuffs and collars, and being herself an adept in all such handiwork she was extremely proud of my aptitude as her pupil. Love was my true teacher, and so fearful was I of losing a crumb of my new knowledge that I bought a copy-book at the village shop, and filled it with an accumulation of notes whenever I had the opportunity.

But do not imagine that my honeymoon was all work and no play; there were pleasant drives over the Moor, to Chagford, Lustleigh Cleeve, and Ottery St. Mary, as well as excursions further afield to Dawlish and Torquay, and other places on the lovely South Devonshire coast; and once or twice John put some sandwiches in his fishing-basket, and we spent quiet happy days beside the shallow streams, in whose bed I could see nothing but loose stones, but from among which he enticed the speckled trout with wondrous flies, and many dexterous twists of hand and wrist.

It was in consequence of Mrs. Toller's wise counsel that we took the country cottage, which has now been our happy home for so many years; she at once dispelled John's hankerings after the Hoxton house, by telling him that he would create prejudice in the minds of my people if he took me there to live; but she saw the disadvantages of the more aristocratic districts quite as clearly, and suggested that we should advertise for a small old-fashioned house within twelve miles of town. Perhaps John would not have given up his own way so readily, had he not been thoroughly charmed with the last proposition.

The advertisement was sent up to a London newspaper "there and then," and as our six weeks' holiday drew to its close, John arranged with the landlady of his bachelor days to accommodate me for a few weeks, and we bade farewell to Mr. and Mrs. Toller, and went to London to begin our life in earnest. The answers to the said advertisement were legion, and from among them all we chose a tempting description of "a cottage residence, standing in an acre of garden ground surrounded by a brick wall, and within a mile of a station on the North Kent railway." It proved to be rather dilapidated, but having been unlet for some time, the landlord was willing to repair, paint, and paper according to our wishes, and as he was himself the only painter and paperhanger in the neighbourhood, his part of the bargain was soon accomplished. While this was being done we bought our furniture out of John's savings, and a hundred-pound legacy left me by my godmother when I was a little girl.

Our sitting-rooms were not large, and we arranged to have their floors stained oak colour to the depth of about a foot, so that we required only squares of carpet, which we bought both alike, so that in time to come the worn portions might be cut out and the best put together. And here let me tell you that instead of the costly concoction sold as oak-staining, our boards

were coloured with a mixture of lamp-black and turpentine and then varnished, and looked as well as heart could wish. The floors of our sleeping apartments we had painted all over in a warm brownish drab, in Continental fashion, so that they could be continually washed over and kept sweet and clean, and a few sheep-skin mats, and one or two tiger trophies which had been sent us as wedding presents, made them look both cosy and unique. For the benefit of any who may like to follow our example with regard to the painted floors, I may as well mention that a large sponge is the very best thing for washing them with. A small portion should be sponged at a time and wiped dry with a cloth, the same as a painted door or wainscot.

Dear Mrs. Toller sent me up a capable, hard-working Devonshire servant-of-all-work, who fell to cleaning with all her might and main, and soon reduced things so far to order that we were able to give up the apartments and locate ourselves in our own home. She brought with her some fine barn-door and black Spanish fowls in a large hamper, a present to John from his step-father, and he developed quite a talent for carpentering in the construction of a covered run for them at one end of the garden.

And now came the tug of war; John persisted that Mary could only be cook, and would have had me seek a house-maid, for he said he could not shut me out from the society of my own family, who were anxious to come and see our little snuggerly, and how could they possibly be made comfortable by one servant? But I resisted all his persuasions and maintained that I should manage matters somehow, and should never be content unless allowed to carry out my experiment. Between you and me, dear reader, I was sometimes very much inclined to give it up, but John was away all day and I had as yet plenty of time on my hands, and though I sometimes had a good cry over a spoiled pudding or a scorched collar, I tried again and again, and managed to efface the traces of tears before it was time to go and meet my spouse at the station and bring him home to a nice little dinner, after which we read, and talked, and strolled about the garden, and were as happy as any couple need be. And when he saw that I was well and blooming, the house clean, Mary good-tempered and neat, and bearing no resemblance to the overworked slavey of his imagination, he left off saying anything about another servant, and praised my management and the low level at which I contrived to keep the weekly bills. More than this, he fell into the spirit of my endeavours, and would find out what was cheap in London and bring home a prairie hen, a Scotch hare, a couple of quails, and a little fish or fruit—things which would have been at famine prices in our neighbourhood, but with which London markets overflow sometimes to the benefit of those who take advantage of them. My husband was no genius, but he steered clear of the error of our clever neighbour, who bought six calves' heads for his family of four because they were cheap in Leadenhall Market, and he never brought me home provision for too many days at a time.

Then when dear father and mother did come to spend a week with us they brought an old servant, ostensibly that she might see Miss Nell's new home, but really that I might not be overburdened. Mother set me to needlework too, which she said it was high time I should begin, and thenceforth John read to me after dinner while I did the daintiest stitching of which my fingers were capable, and looked forward to the coming wearer of the little garments with pleasure and pride, if with some natural foreboding.

Perhaps it is rather forestalling facts to say here that when we balanced accounts at the end of our first year's housekeeping they stood thus :—

Rent	£40
Rates and taxes	10
Railway ticket	10
Housekeeping	90
Wages	16
Washing	5
Coal, &c.	12
Total	£183

Therefore we had £117 to the good. Baby's coming, however, cost us £12 altogether, but she and I were both healthy and well, and after nurse had taken her departure, I did not find it necessary to have any additional help. The little one slept all night, and lay crowing and kicking in her cradle while I dressed and had breakfast with my husband; and when he was gone, I washed and dressed her, took her into the garden if fine, and if wet nursed her till she was ready for her morning's sleep, and then I was free for other things; and in the evening she was always asleep again, and a bright little table spread to welcome her father when he came home at six o'clock.

My good Mary maintained that it was a pleasure to do anything for such a "beauty-baby," and insisted on doing nearly all our washing; she was one of those who get forward with work in the morning, for she was always astir by half-past five, and even earlier on occasion. The least I could do was to try and lighten her labours, and I made my little Mabel some frocks of a rather antiquated material called Turkey twill, and managed always to iron the white frocks which she wore for best in summer, while in winter I dressed her in scarlet or pink flannel, which with a white pinafore makes the prettiest of baby attire. Of course there were trying days and wakeful nights when her small teeth troubled her, but we forgot them when they were past.

At Christmas I had a month's holiday, for we locked up our cottage and went to Thirlton Priory, where as there were still four maiden aunts (there had been another wedding in the family by this time) to nurse the darling, and Mary with nothing to do but wash and dress and take her out, she was seldom with me except at night, and I was able with the help of my sister to make her quite a stock of clothes, and repair

some deficiencies in my own wardrobe. The second year of our married life our expenses came to £10 more than the first, and John spent another £10 on clothes, but dear mother having given me a new bonnet and dress, I was provided for in that respect.

Our second child, whom we named Frank, and were very proud of as the first boy, was born when Mabel was just two years old, and then I thought it wisest to engage a second general servant, a young cousin of Mary's, who came to me for £10 a year, and the two between them did not only all the house-work but the washing and ironing, while I devoted myself entirely to my children and the necessary needlework. My husband being absent all day, I have never had a nursery; and having them always with me, the little ones have grown up in good habits and manners, and have had nothing to unlearn. They have mastered their letters while playing with bricks, and done their juvenile hemming and sewing at my knee.

We have four children now, and are still poor but content. Our pleasures are in our mutual love, in the books which "papa" reads aloud on winter evenings, in the pursuits of our children, and in the society of one or two congenial neighbours who come in to spend a social hour.

Our boys attend a good school daily, and we hope will pass competitive examinations, and earn their livelihood by their own exertions. Each of them has a favourite study: Frank is a zealous insect hunter, and Hugh a great botanist, considering his age and opportunities. The girls are domesticated, not superfluously educated, but ladies in every respect, and by virtue of their own love of reading, and such teaching as I have been able to give and procure for them, have responsive and cultivated minds; and after all, the true meaning of the word "education" is the fitting of the individual to the station of life in which it has pleased God to place her. Mabel shows a decided talent for figure painting, and an artistic friend has taken her under his wing, and assures us that in a few years she will make a very nice little income, by painting on china for some porcelain works in which he is one of the oldest partners.

We have never had any drawbacks in the shape of illness, beyond the inevitable measles and whooping-cough, but while I thankfully acknowledge God's goodness in keeping us from such evils, I must say that I believe He means His creatures to be healthy if they will but follow His laws, and the dictates of their own common sense. We have not gone out in damp weather, nor sat in wet shoes; we have not eaten unwholesome food, worn low-necked dresses, nor ruined our constitutions in any way whatever; and, above all, have had plenty of wholesome, happy employment, and I think I may say, cheerful hearts. The sorrows time has brought us have had no root of bitterness in them, and we can wish nothing better for our children than that they may be as much blessed as their parents before them.

ELIZA CLARKE.