

MONSIEUR LE MAIRE.

In this country of ours, it is not always easy for the suitor to get his mistress's consent to marry him—even when that is obtained. It is not always easy to get the father's consent, and, in short, a thousand things may occur to prove the truth of the saying, that the course of true love never does run smooth. But once it comes fairly to marry, the difficulty is all at an end. Everything then is as easy as lying. To get married in England is a very simple affair indeed, for there are several ways of doing it. A man may marry in private, or he may be married at the parish-church, or he may be married in the city-hall, either by licence or after due publication of banns on three successive Sundays, after the form and fashion of the forefathers; secondly, he may be married in any chapel or meeting-house belonging to persons of any religious persuasion whatsoever, provided it be duly registered for the purpose; and, lastly, he may dispense with the religious ceremonial altogether—he may decline availing himself of the assistance of either priest or minister, and may marry in a civil manner, as is done in this country. In that part of the United Kingdom called Scotland, he may be married by a blacksmith, or anybody else, as he pleases; and it is not so difficult to get what does not constitute a marriage in Scotland than what does. In any case, there is not the least chance of getting into any legal difficulty if efficiently performed; persons, ministers, registrars, and blacksmiths, being ready enough at all times to earn their fees; and the law, in any case at least, cannot be said to insist on vexatious and needless formalities. It throws no difficulties in the way which can try the patience of the most impatient of husbands. It is not so, however, in France. There, if the law of marriage had been framed by the same rights of the people, and with the same express purpose of deterring their countrymen from assuming the bonds and obligations of wedlock, it could not have more effectively put an end to purgatory, and the difficulties of birth, death, age, the consent of parents, if absent, &c., which must be produced before one can get married, than it has done in England. It would really seem, that the lawyers, when discussing this part of their code, were labouring under a monomaniacal idea of being penny-wise and pound-fool, of considerable difficulty to get married once, and as to having more than one wife at one and the same time it is *la Turpe*, the thing in France which is most abhorred, and which is not only French bred and born, great delay and expense must often be, submitted to before the requirements of the law can be satisfied, and even in the case of France, and the other is a foreigner, the difficulty is increased fourfold, and becomes, in the case of a stupid mayor—such as in England—almost insuperable. Now this was my own predicament. An Englishman marrying one of his own countrywomen in France, may be married in the chapel of the parish-church, or he may be married in the French law altogether; but it is not so, if he would marry a Frenchwoman. In that case he must be married according to the law of his own church, religion, and country. His contract only, ordains that such contract must be entered into before the municipal authorities of the district in which one of the contracting parties resides; or rather in which he or she has resided long enough to have acquired a domicile as regards marriage which is affected by the law of the country in which he or she is domiciled. In short, a foreigner can only be married in France to a French subject, according to French law—that is, before the civil magistrate, or rather before the mayor of the town in England. From the Lord Mayor of London downwards to the most insignificant first magistrate of the first infinitesimal borough corporation have the same law, and the same mode of gathering together, either for jollity or palaver, of their fellow-citizens; but in France, the municipal authority is not only a more personage; he is a government functionary, and chief-priest in the temple of Hymen.

For my own part, neither parental objections nor the fear of a third day's headed my courtship. I was undisturbed alike by the cares attendant on the disposition of wealth, and the anxieties inseparable from poverty. I was not at all of the opinion that there was anything to do but to be married as soon as we pleased. It was at this point, however, that all our difficulties commenced. Paris has twelve mayors—one for each of the twelve arrondissements in which the city is divided—and marriages must be celebrated before the mayor of the arrondissement in which one of the parties is domiciled. When therefore, both lady and gentleman are resident in the capital, there is generally a choice between two mayors, and it happens that the party domiciled was in the same arrondissement as that of my intended wife, we had no choice but to be married by Monsieur le Maire of the third arrondissement, and that officer being both

very stupid and very tenacious of his opinion, we were actually compelled to have recourse to the law before he could be made to perform his duty.

The individual who filled the post of mayor of the third arrondissement of Paris at that period, was a retired lawyer, an ex-courier, of the name of Monsieur le Maire, a kind of such a man as you will retire from his business or profession, when he has secured a competency, and is in the enjoyment of his leisure, in order to add a little dignity to the *bonnet* he promises himself for the remainder of his days. In person, Monsieur le Maire was a tall, thin, elderly man, of a respectable manner, precise, somewhat pompous and cold. Add to this, that he had an overwhelming idea of his own merit, and was much prejudiced against any thing of the common routine of his office. I was not long in verifying the correctness of this my first impression, and that, too, although I had taken the precaution to get an introduction to the great man from a mutual acquaintance. He was a troublesome fellow to deal with, as the sequel will abundantly show.

"Monsieur le Maire," said I, on my first interview with him, with my very best bow, and in my very best French, with the Anglo-French accent which I had acquired in the country, "I am about to espouse a French lady, who is domiciled in the arrondissement which enjoys the advantage of being presided over by you; and I have the honor to request that you will participate; and I have availed myself of the kindness of your obliging friend to enable me to inquire of you personally what formalities it will be requisite to attend to in order to contract. I am quite aware, that the French law of marriage is very strict in the case of one of the contracting parties being a foreigner, and I am made aware of your being of the best blood; but I could not do better than apply to monsieur for advice and direction."

"Monsieur," said he, with a slight smile, "I am very glad to be consulted in this matter. I am quite aware, that the French law of marriage is very strict in the case of one of the contracting parties being a foreigner, and I am made aware of your being of the best blood; but I could not do better than apply to monsieur for advice and direction."

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"Does Madame votre mère intend to be present at your marriage?"

"She does not,"

"Does Monsieur," said the mayor briskly, "as if delighted at being able to give me this extra trouble, I since you are a minor as regards marriage, I must have the written consent of Madame votre mère, properly attested by British authorities."

"By what authorities?" I asked.

"By the laws of France, where is her domicile?"

"She resides chiefly in London."

"Eh bien! the consent of Madame must be given in the city of London."

"The what?" said I, laughing heartily—the what?"

"By the Lord Mayor—the Lord Mayor of London."

"Surely, Monsieur le Maire, you are joking. The Lord Mayor of London has nothing whatever to do with marriages. His lordship would laugh at me, if I were to apply to him on such a subject. Besides, even as a magistrate before whom my mother could make a declaration of her consent, the Lord Mayor is not the proper officer to apply to, inasmuch as he has no jurisdiction in that quarter of the capital in which she resides. You are asking me, therefore, to do the impossible, and I cannot carry out your request."

"Then, monsieur," said the mayor with the most polite smile, "I cannot give you marriage papers (we will not marry you)."

"Not marry me! Am I, then, to understand that no Englishman who is under five-and-twenty years of age can be married in France without the consent of his parents, besides the Lord Mayor of London?"

"Just so, monsieur, if the parents reside in the city of London."

"The Lord Mayor," I interrupted warmly, "has nothing to do with it. Mayors in England have no jurisdiction in such matters."

"Monsieur, I know my duty. A mayor is a mayor. I perfectly understand the nature of the function appertaining to that important office. I have never understood that the majesty would have conferred to my care one of the arrondissements of the city. Besides, some years since, I passed a week or more in London, during my residence in one of our national institutions my serious study. Of course, I did not forget the Lord Mayor do you know, Monsieur le Maire, the name of the minister of Madame, certified by him, on no vous marier pas."

"Very well, monsieur," said I with a slight smile, "I will not attempt to contact the Lord Mayor just heard—very well I must endeavor to satisfy you. Pray, go on."

"In what degree does you domiciled when last you were married, Monsieur le Maire, with the tone and manner of a judge or advocate examining a witness."

"In the diocese of London."

"Which, I believe, is in the province of Canterbury."

"It is," I replied, wondering what would come of this.

"Must not the banns of marriage in England be published on three successive Sundays at the parish-church of one of the parties?"

"Eh bien! since the mayor with a look of triumph; since monsieur cannot have a licence, and since the archbishop has not published his law, I intend, he must procure a certificate to the effect that banns may, under certain circumstances, be dispensed with, from the Lord Mayor of London."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed I, fairly losing my temper at the mention of this other minor to whom I was to be sent for permission to be married, "I will not be troubled by the Lord Mayor, but I have no more to do with this matter than the Lord Mayor of London. It is impossible."

"Eh bien! monsieur," said the mayor in a lowering position, "on no vous marier pas. I will have both the pieces I have mentioned—first, the certificate of the archbishop, and then from the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury. Without them, I repeat, on no vous marier pas."

Expostulation was vain. The mayor was not to be persuaded either that the conditions he insisted on were impossible of fulfillment, or that they were unnecessary. In vain our mutual friends, and the friends of the bride, had plunged over head and ears in the *Débat*, and endeavored to bring him to reason—in vain I requested him to take counsel with his brother-in-law, and to step into the *salon*, and being the quarter where such marriages were most common. The unfortunate word "Nonsense!" was repeated by him, and he showed us hastily, out, the last words I heard being, "Lord Mayor do Londres, and On no vous marier pas."

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What was to be done! There was only one mayor in Paris who could marry me, and he would not, except on certain absurd conditions, which I believed it would be quite impossible to comply with. I was compelled to be applied at once to a person competent to give me a legal opinion on the question; but lovers are apt to be impulsive,

and forgot to weigh pros and cons. A lover who reflects is but half in love. I was really in love—over, and I was not a little surprised, when my reflection awoke, at all once set out for England, without having any very clear idea of what I was going to do when I got there. We were to be married in the city-hall, and I was depositing myself in one corner of the couple of a diligence, I was soon rumbling along on my way to Boulogne. As the hour for our departure drew near, I was very sorry and rolled along on the dreary road, I over and over again cursed the obstinacy and conceit of the *Jack-in-the-box*, and the stupidity of my friends, and, at length, I was compelled to my journey, perhaps for months, the realization of my hopes. Love-like, I conjured up every possible misfortune, and I was so much affected by the delay, I half persuaded myself that something must happen to break of the affair altogether; and as to my excited imagination, the prospect before me great blacker and blacker, the more and more heartily did I anathematize, in a choice compound of British and Gallic, the pig-headedness of Monsieur le Maire du troisième arrondissement. His stern "on no vous marier pas" incessantly haunted my ears. If I endeavored to snatch a moment of repose, how sleep would I have, and how I would curse the mayor who was the most prominent figure—the nightmare for ever standing between me and the girl I left behind me; and when I awoke, I would find myself in the arms of a nasal whine of the professional beggar, who was following the lumbering vehicle up the hill his *chariot*, I will you not, conveyed no message, but was mired but that of "on no vous marier pas."

I need not say that I got no certificate from Monsieur le Maire of Paris, and that I was tormented by the advice of a friend, who, being in love, had all his senses about him, I earned myself with the consent of my surgeon, and I was obliged to return to the district in which she resided. To this I added certificates of births and deaths whatsoever, unless excepting that of the birth of my intended wife, which I had not, and which could not easily procure; and, so provided, set off on my return to Paris, in the full persuasion that I had done all, and more than all, that was necessary to be done. I had thought Monsieur le Maire. Fixing his double eye-glasses across the sharp ridge of his long nose, he asked me, "Monsieur le Maire, what is the name of the district in which you had been originally at so much pains to procure—the English originals, as well as the French translations of them, although the former were not necessary, and which I had not, and which I had thought Monsieur le Maire. Fixing his double eye-glasses across the sharp ridge of his long nose, he asked me, "Monsieur le Maire, what is the name of the district in which you had been originally at so much pains to procure—the English originals, as well as the French translations of them, although the former were not necessary, and which I had not, and which I had thought Monsieur le Maire. 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