

HOW HE WON HIS BRIDE.

BY GEORGE HEPWORTH.

CHAPTER I.

Paul Plumb sat in the smoking-room of the Hotel Marx watching a few business-sloped hours drag their slow length along.

Where is the Hotel Marx? Well, it is one of those amiable edifices which would be equally satisfied with itself in any quarter of the globe.

"In the name of all the gods at once!" he cried, as he gave the newcomer both his hands. "From what passing cloud did you drop, my boy?"

Jack and Paul were of the class of '88. In mathematics, Paul led Jack by head and shoulders, but in Greek they were cheek by jowl.

"This is luck, Jack. Why, I don't know how to properly express myself. Come, sit down, old boy, and let's have a talk."

"Not here, Paul. I hate to talk in a room full of listeners. See! That fellow yonder with a cast in his eye and a lopsided nose has already pricked up his ears for a little gossip.

"Why, yes, in the parlor. No, that won't do. Women are more curious than men. Bless me, Jack, what's the matter with my room? It's only a six-by-nine six-parlor, but it will serve our purpose. Come along."

Ten minutes later they were having the merriest chat they ever heard of. First, of course, various reminiscences of college-days passed in review.

"And now, dear father-confessor," said Paul at last, "I've told you all I know and some things I don't know about myself. What have you been doing, Jack? Don't assume that sheepish expression as though you had just been collared for picking pockets, but just tell the plain, unvarnished truth."

"I think I shall surprise you, Paul." "Trumped your partner's ace, eh?" "No, not quite that."

"No, something I'm proud of."

"Well, Jack, then you can't surprise me, for that is just what I should expect you to do."

"Paul, I'm married."

"What?" exclaimed Paul, and he must have opened his eyes pretty wide, for Jack came at him with—

"Paul, did you ever see the Babo Virginiana, alias, the great horned owl?" "What do you mean?" asked Paul.

"Nothing, except that you happen to look like that specimen of ornithology, that's all. I promised to surprise you, didn't I?" Paul nodded, for the news rendered him speechless. "Well, I've done it."

"Great Scott! Married! You, Jack Numbers, confirmed bachelor, woman-hater, etcetera, etcetera?"

"Yes, Paul. The bachelor nail was driven in to its head, but it wasn't clinched on the under side. Fate yanked it out with a claw-hammer, and here I am."

"But wasn't this rather sudden, Jack?" "Perhaps it was. Death and marriage are liable to be sudden, you know."

"Well, that's very odd, I can't get used

to the idea. I'm sitting on the unknown sea. Why, the news knocks me on my beam ends. I'm a total wreck. What on earth could have made you marry, Jack?"

"First, a ghost, Paul, and second, a woman."

"Thanks, Jack. It's awfully good of you to inflame curiosity in this way. I'll come, never fear; but perhaps I'll wait until the honeymoon is over."

"Better fix an earlier date, my boy. That moon has been screwed tight at the full and is going to last. There are no eclipses and there is no waxing and waning in my matrimonial firmament."

"Poor Jack!"

"Reserve your comments until you've seen her."

"But the ghost! What connection is there between a ghost and your wife?"

"Ah, yes, Paul. Thank Heaven for that ghost! I had a dream, which was not all a dream," says Byron. Well, I saw a ghost which was not all a ghost. I must tell you that yarn some time. It's rather long, but I guess it will amuse you. Think of the stilly night, the wee sma' hours, flesh creeping with horror, eyes rolling in a fine frenzy, thunder roaring overhead and your humble servant drinking witch's broth and wrestling with an apparition. Ha, ha, my fine fellow, it's a story worth telling, I assure you, and when you have leisure—"

"Jack, I haven't anything but leisure, and if you don't want me to suffocate in the smoke of internal conflagration you'll begin to pipe your lay at once."

"What! Now?"

"Of course—now. Isn't it Emerson who says that now is all the time you can reckon on, or words to that effect? Do you suppose I can stand the strain an hour longer without being cooped with iron hoops? Come, I'll ring for cigars, and with my feet on the table, in the reposeful attitude of a listener, you shall spin your yarn."

And so it was agreed.

CHAPTER II.

"Well, Paul, lend me your ears, and let me commend myself to your patience. I am glad to tell you the story of my love-making, for it is as pleasant to me as a walk through a field of clover-blossoms. On my honor, I didn't intend to get married, but if Heaven will insist on tumbling into a fellow's lap, what is he to do? You will forgive me when you see my wife."

"By the way, my boy, hand me that pouch of Virginia leaf. When a man is in my state of mind, the cigar too faintly expresses his happiness; he must burn incense to his goddess in the bowl of a pipe."

"Now, then, do you remember that my sister Inogen had a bad fall during my senior year? I told you about it at the time, but you were plowing up Greek roots and it made no impression on you."

"Certainly I do, Jack; she was hurt by a runaway horse."

"Yes, and the nervous shock came near costing her her life. She is a plucky girl, though, and for a while pulled along famously; but about eighteen months ago, some rather alarming complications set in, and the doctor insisted that she should go to the sea-shore, away from the everlasting tumult of fashionable society. What she wanted, he said, was some of the 'roll on, thou deep and dark-blue ocean' influence. The salt air might give her an appetite, and as one cracker served her for three square meals, with enough left over for breakfast next morning, this seemed rather desirable."

"Of course, the brunt of the business fell on me. I had to pack my grip-sack and start on an exploring expedition. I answered every advertisement in the papers. You ought to go through that experience and, my word for it, you would be sober for the rest of your natural life. One man wrote that his place was all that a snother's heart could wish, and that the house commanded the finest prospect in that section of the country. When I got there, I was welcomed by a cloud of mosquitoes that darkened the sun, the house was a rickety, tumble-down concern, its clapboards and shingles fairly yawning. On inquiry, I also discovered that the region was infested by four kinds of chills and fever, so you could pay your money and take your choice. The man who trusts to advertisements is pretty sure to fill a premature grave."

"You had hard luck, old fellow," suggested Paul. "Probably you were on the still-hunt for a corner of paradise."

"No; I ask for nothing but the comforts and conveniences of life. I'm not over-particular, but when the doctor tells me to get on top of a hill I don't want to settle in a mud-hole."

"Well, did you persevere?"

"Yes, and at last, about fifty miles from here, struck just the right spot. That is where the family are now living; and she is there, too."

"Ivy and columbine and honeysuckle and all that sort of thing, eh?"

"No, but a right up-and-down, common-sense, old-fashioned place. I was riding along leisurely, one day—hot as blazes it was, too—and was up to the chin in disappointment. A point of land which stretched far out to sea and was fringed with rocks attracted my attention. The white caps dashed against the shore, and the cool breeze was very refreshing. On a knoll, with the whole Atlantic in front and a wooded area at the side, was the quaintest house you ever saw. 'Some poet built that,' I said to myself. 'I wonder if he could be induced to move out?' I wandered over the grounds for half an hour, thinking that, perhaps, I was dreaming. The site was simply perfect, but the lawn was overgrown and a rather mysterious air of neglect pervaded the place. To my surprise, the house was deserted. Not a human being, not even a dog or a horse or a cow was to be seen. That struck me as so odd that I ventured up on the veranda and peered through the windows. Not a sign of life anywhere."

"Then I knocked. No answer. I knocked again, louder than before, and pretty soon a little, old woman, such as you see in a nightmare, made her appearance. She looked old enough to be a relic of some 'butcher or baker or candle-stick-maker' of Pharaoh's time, and her

wrinkles were deeper than the furrows made by a subsoil plow. But she didn't know anything; could give no information whatever. I asked a thousand questions, but got no answer. She merely pointed toward the village, and then, her patience apparently exhausted, slammed the door in my face."

"A pleasant introduction to your new property, Jack."

"Wasn't it? I didn't know whether to be mad or to laugh, so I swallowed a dose of both."

"Well, I found the real estate agent after a while, and asked him about the place; but he was non-committal. That made me feel rather creepy."

"Who owns the place?" I asked.

"The widow Grink," he answered.

"How much land is there?"

"About one hundred and twenty acres."

"Is it for sale?"

"Yes, and has been for three years."

"What is the price?"

"Anything within reason," he answered. "But nobody wants to buy it."

"Why, it's the handsomest site within a score of miles!"

"For sure."

"And nobody will make a bid for it?"

"Only one man, Stephen Coggs, who lives within a dozen rods of the gateway, and the widow won't take it."

"Then there must be something radically wrong about the house?"

"He nodded in a very ominous way."

"Is the drainage bad? Is the water brackish? Is it unhealthy?"

"No, nothing of that sort."

"Won't you kindly explain, then, for I confess I'm getting dizzy."

"He shrugged his shoulders, and replied in a dreadful monosyllable:—"

"Haunted!"

"I never felt so relieved in my life. 'Is that all?' I asked. 'Is that truly and on your honor the only reason why nobody will buy the house?'"

"Isn't that reason enough?" he asked.

"I broke into a hearty laugh."

"You are not afraid of ghosts?" he queried.

"No, why should I be? I expect to be one myself, some time."

"Then he told me that Coggs could give me further details, but that the widow Grink lived in the city, and if I really wanted to buy, ghost and all, she would probably make satisfactory terms."

"So I came here post-haste, hunted the old lady up and found her. I found her daughter also."

"Your present wife, Jack?"

"Precisely."

"Well, this is a pretty little drama, my boy. I didn't know such things ever happened off the stage."

"I didn't mean to fall in love with that girl, but it was my fate, and I couldn't help it. You see, I hadn't any warning of the danger. The first thing I knew, I was gone. Then, of course, it was too late."

"Well, as I was about to say, I found the two ladies living in very straitened circumstances. The old man had been a visionary sort of creature, who never understood why he couldn't spend his dollar and keep it, too. He began life with a snug little fortune, and bought this beautiful place with the hope of living there to a ripe old age and then starting from it to Heaven. He kept spending his principal, first on the house, then on the stables, then on the windmill, then on clearing up the grounds; and when the bank cashier sent him word that his funds were gone, he took to his bed and died. A nice fix for two women to find themselves in! The property had absorbed about twenty thousand dollars, but they were willing to sell it for ten. It had a bad name, and nobody could stay there over night. The bells rang, the building shook on its foundations, and bedlam was let loose. One man only—that is Coggs—was willing to take it off their hands, but he offered only three thousand; and as the ghost might get it into his head to clear out at any time, they refused the offer."

"My visits to the old lady were rather more frequent than was required for strictly business purposes, and I lingered in the city for nearly three months, at the end of which time—"

"Cupid got in his deadly work," remarked Paul.

"Two souls with but a single thought, Two hearts that beat as one," and all like that, you know."

"Yes, and you may joke as much as you please, my boy, at my expense."

"All right, Jack. I am immensely interested, even if I do quote from 'Ingenue.' Now, then what next?"

(To be Continued.)

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CASAN, THE TARTAR DWARF.

A Fierce Little Mongolian Who Lived Centuries Ago.

In the series of papers on "Historic Dwarfs," in St. Nicholas, Mary Shears Roberts describes the famous Casan. Mrs. Roberts says:

Casan was the name of a little Mongolian Tartar who flourished in the early part of the thirteenth century.

He was born in the eastern part of Asia, not far from the ancient city of Karakorum. His parents belonged to one of the barbarian hordes that owed allegiance to Genghis Khan, and Casan became a fierce though small warrior and fought bravely under the banner of the great and mighty Mongol conqueror.

The exact height of this little dwarf is unknown. He was certainly not over three feet tall, but he was active and muscular and, like all his race, could endure hunger, thirst, fatigue and cold.

The Tartars were unexcelled in the management of their beautiful horses. The fleetest animals were trained to stop short in full career, and to face without flinching wild beast or formidable foe. Casan was a born soldier, and at an early age became expert in all the exercises that belonged to a Tartar education. He could manage a fiery coarser with great skill and could shoot an arrow or throw a lance with unerring aim, in full career, advancing or retreating.

Like many of those small in stature, he was anything but puny in spirit, and while yet a lad he gathered about him a troop of wild young Tartar boys as reckless and daring as himself, of whom by common consent he became leader. He commanded his lawless young comrades with a strange mixture of dignity and energy, and they obeyed his orders with zeal and willingness. Sometimes they would go on long hunting expeditions, seldom failing to lay waste any lonely habitation they happened on.

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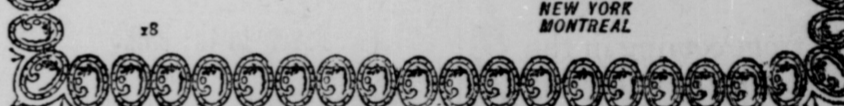
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JOHN NEWSON

A tea party will be held at Winsloe Road near the Methodist Brick Church, on the 7th of July next. Proceeds in aid of the repairs lately made to the parsonage. Tea on the tables at 1 o'clock p. m. Tickets for adults, 25c; children under 12 years 15c. Should the day prove unfavorable the tea will be held on the first fine day following.

The 82nd Batt. Band is expected to be in attendance, swings and all other amusements will be on the grounds.

By order of Committee.

ISSAC HOLMAN Secretary.

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QUEEN STREET

The Annual Meeting of the Masonic Temple Company, will be held in the Masonic Temple, on Wednesday, 14th day of July, 1897, at 8 o'clock, p. m. for the election of Directors and general business. By order, D. MacLEAN

June 28—d3i, wli