A PREARRANGED - - - MARRIAGE.

As a boy I had but one great trouble in the world, and its name was Eliza. "My Eliza," Godmother Richards called her. She was a very nightmare. I am sorry to say that news of her demise would have given him intense joy. But that was my godmother's fault, but for her I never should have cast a thought upon Eliza.

My Eliza was nothing now to me. When I was in frocks this model little girl, a year my junior, was spoken of ecstatically, whenever Godmother Richards came to the city. She was her other godchild, a model of grace and beauty and obedience. "I shall bring her up for Billy," she would say. 'They shall be little man and wife. Don't you want to send a kiss to your Eliza, Billy —a nice sweet one?" At four I used to send it. At eight I allowed it to be taken. At ten I refused my lips.

It was hard to bear then, but nothing to the persecution it became at 16. Then I was obliged to hear what pieces my Eliza could play upon the piano—how much French she could speak—how she had on long dresses—how much handsomer she was than any godmother knew, and, in short, how it was the hope of the old lady's heart to bring us together some day and make a match of it. Even the dislike I had to quarreling with the fairy godmother who could convert my pumpkin of hope into a coach and horses with a wave of her pen, could not make me exhibit any show of complacency when Eliza was spoken of. I scowled in silence and refused to praise, and had the satisfaction of hearing my godmother inform my mother in a stage whisper aside, that actually the dear boy was head and ears in love with Eliza already.

This sort of thing went on until I was 22, growing even worse with time, and fast approaching a climax. We were to be introduced to each other before long; a meeting was on the tapis. We were ordered to be mutually stricken with love at first sight, to do our courting in the shortest possible space of time and to live thereafter with Godmother Richards, who confessed to having divided her property between us with a view to our ultimate union. According to her account of affairs, the young lady would throw no obstacle in my way, but "felt as though she knew me already."

"Forward little wretch," I said to myself. "She is perfectly disgusting. No power on earth shall ever make us acquainted. Perhaps my brother Tom, who introduced "My Eliza," into his conversation in a most trying manner, and who drew a picture upon our room wall of our imaginary meeting, wherein she fell into my arms in a highly dramatic style, excited my wrath against the young lady to a pitch which it could have scarcely arisen otherwise."

Godmother Richard never did anything like other people. She never wrote to say that she was coming and came. But always pounced down upon us at 5 in the morning or 12 at night, without warning.

I was shaving in the early morning, when some one at my door cried, "don't mind me," and in came the godmother.

"Prepare yourself for a joyful surprise my dear Billy," she cried. "She has consented at last to meet you. I'm going to have you both with your parents at my house for a week. Wednesday is the day, and if you can't manage to make her say 'yes' in that time, why you're not worthy of your godmother.

The surprise had made me gash my chin, and I turned upon her with anything but an amiable countenance.

"I hope she has not been annoyed on my account," I said, sarcastically. Don't urge her to meet me I beg. I wouldn't have her to do anything disagreeable to please me."

But she did not see the sarcasm.

"Don't be angry" she said. "Girls are naturally timid, and she knows how smart and handsome you are, and is just a little afraid of you. She thinks ever so much of you."

I did'nt use wicked language, but I wanted to.

"You'll be there, of course," continued my godmother, "and look your best. Be sure to come. You'll admire her so, I know."

And she departed.

"Go voluntarily to meet Eliza, never! That afternoon I packed my trunk and fled the house, determining never to return or give my godmother a clue as to my whereabouts as long as Eliza awaited my coming.

"Let her leave her confounded money where she pleases," I said, apostrophizing my absent godmother. "No one shall saddle me with a wife against my will."

My cousins the Cripins, took summer boarders. Their house could always be stretched to hold one more. Thither, therefore, I posted without ceremony.

"We can accommodate you with an attic room, if you'll put up with that," said the old lady. "We had a very nice room yesterday but now its occupied. But you've lost it for a young lady, so you won't mind."

I declared that I did not mind, and I meant it; when at the tea table the young lady in question dawned upon me. A little brunette, with a rose bud mouth and hair that waved and kinked in the most magical manner.

Miss Lizzie Smith by name, as my hostess informed me.

That night when I laid my head upon my pillow I felt that I had met my fate. I did not seek to fly it. I talked with her; I sang with her; I rowed with her and I drove with her about. I took board for a month instead of a week.

It was not pleasant, to be sure, to receive an angry letter from home, upbraiding me with throwing away my good fortune. Godmother Richards was very angry and had threatened to disinherit me. All my own fault, what harm could it have done me to know the girl. A good deal, I thought, if it had prevented me from knowing Lizzie Smith. I wrote an answer in which I in a measure, defied my Godmother and said a good deal abot youth and health, and a disposition to keep myself, and was glad after all that was over, and went on boating and driving as before. But one day I received a sudden shock, on learning that Miss Smith was going home.

We were to part. I resolved that we should not be separated before I knew whether she really liked me well enough to make me happy.

The next day I drove her over to an old fort and having reached the spot found ourselves alone amidst crumbling stones and grass and tangled bushes, just as I hoped I should. Within the fort a great block of stone lay with moss upon it, thick and green and spongy. There I made her seat herself.

"Lizzie," I said "We haven't known each other very long, but I have known you long enough to be sure that I love you with all my heart. Will you be my wife, Lizzie?"

She cast her eyes down and blushed and said nothing.

"Can't you like me well enough?" I asked bending over her.

"I—I think I do," faltered Lizzie. "But the thing is, what will they say about it?"

"They ?" I querried, venturing to steal an arm about her waist. "You mean your parents?"

"Yes," said Lizzie, "and my godmother."

Visions of my godmother flashed across my mind.

"You see," said Lizzie, "she's a very peculiar old lady, and really did consider herself bound to teach me my catechism. Most sponsors think giving you a silver spoon is enough, you know. But why she should think she must choose me a husband, I don't know."

Again my godmother arose before my vision.

"But she did," said Lizzie, hysterically. "And that is not the worst of it, she thought when he was chosen I must like him. Oh, that horrible Billy, how I have hated him; a nasty, red-haired little puppy, I am sure. His ver' name is insupportable. Billy, bah! He used to send me kisses, and sugar plums and his love until I did wish he would have the measles or whooping cough and not get well. it was wicked, but I did it, and to end it all, the little wretch really thought I was in love with him and intended to meet me at my godmother's. Then I could stand it no longer. I refused to meet 'Billy' and made mamma send me here for a month. I shall be left out of her will—Godmother Richard's, you know—but I could not be married against my will for a million—nor for the whole world; and I'd die before I'd so much as speak to that dreadful Billy. Oh, what is the matter Mr. Brown?"

"Matter!" I groaned; "matter! I can't believe it. You—she—I—"

"Oh, dear, what is it?" cried Lizzie.

"I believe," said I, with the calmness of despair, "that you are 'my Eliza.'"

"Godmother Richards does call me Eliza. I was christened so, but I have the name, "Lizzie," and you—you'r not 'Billy?'"

Then there was a tableau. In ended with a peal of laughter which came from Lizzie.

"So I ran away from you," she cried.

"And I ran away from you, too." cried I.

Then I told her all, and we looked at each other.

"We have such common names," said Lizzie. "Miss Smith and Mr. Brown. It never entered my mind that you were 'Billy.'"

"How could I dream that you were 'my Eliza?'" I said. And then:

Suffice it to say that I drove Lizzie home as though the little wagon were a triumphal car, and the next day we went to our godmother's.

The shutters of the house were all closed and everything was quiet. Afterwards I understood that the disappointment had caused my godmother to take to her bed with the idea that she was extremely ill. No one answered our first knock, but the second upper window creaked and a head was stuck forth. Then there came a little shriek and an exclamation vehement if ungrammatical. "Gracious goodness, it's them. I was going to alter my will tomorrow and here's her with Billy and him with his Eliza."

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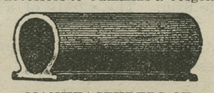

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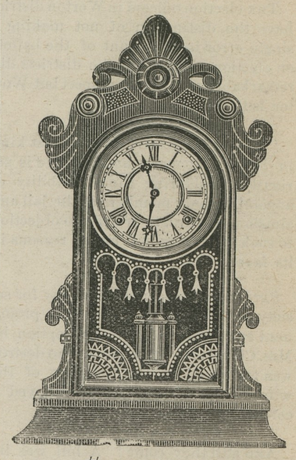

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