

# COMING TO GET MARRIED.

BY ERNEST HELMSTEDT.

"Come to get married!" Dorothea was just on the point of lifting up the tea-urn, but she only held up both hands with such a queer smile, and looked at the pair as she would have done at a brace of nice ducks to be picked for her master's dinner. Dear soul! Matrimony was a *terra incognita* to her, about which she had the most vague and grotesque ideas, as one might be supposed to have of the Feejee Islands. She had a just and conscientious sense of what was due to "creature comforts," presenting them in the best and most appropriate shape, and in this way she was of immense value to the worthy rector and his benign sister. Indeed, so alive was she to all temporal concerns, that the good man at one time took occasion, when she was spreading the table for dinner, to read her an extra homily upon the interests of her soul. Poor Dorothea began to cry first, which still more inspired the eloquence of the good man, and then she hung down her head and blushed, and then, to his utter amazement, went off into such a fit of laughter as really to endanger suffocation in the paroxysm. Upon recovering from this, she exclaimed, "It's of no sort of use. Soon's ever a man talks to me alone, I always think of Jacob Flanders, and that sets me to laughing."

At this moment Aunt Jane looked grave, and directed some article to be carried to the kitchen, and then explained, with spinster-like propriety, how Jacob had even attempted the unseemly language of love to Dorothea, going so far as to kiss her hand, at the relation of which enormity, Aunt Jane slightly blushed, and the pastor's face departed very considerably from clerical gravity. It is astonishing how much more complacently women regard the matrimonial intentions of others than do the other sex. Their sympathies are all alive upon the occasion, and they feel an interest and tenderness, perfect for the time being. Aunt Jane had not one particle of vanity or selfishness in the world. She had never thought of a man, except when she thought of her brother, and never seemed to imagine that she existed otherwise than as an appendage to him. When the pair determined upon the desperate measure of matrimony appeared at the parsonage, she fixed her benign regards upon them, mechanically placed her finger upon the side of her smooth cheek, as she was wont to do when the pranks of the poodle arrested her attention from the intricacies of "reed stich" or "lent," and happening to be nearest Dorothea, she leaned one hand upon her shoulder, as much as to say, "Dear souls, how nicely they look together," and then she had a confused image of the tenderness of a pair of birds she once kept in a cage, and that used to look so lovingly upon the same perch all night side by side, each with its head behind its wing.

"So you have come to get married?" said the pastor, half rising from his chair, and speaking much more severely than the occasion would seem to justify. Ralph assented, looking a little blank at the sternness of the good man, and half began to think, as a man is pretty apt to do, that he was doing a very foolish thing. Sybil's pretty face grew crimson, and her eyes dropped, but then she looked as if she thought it all quite natural, and she was content. Ralph had come to Pennsylvania four years before, and settled in the village of —, and, of course, became one of the parishioners of my friend. He had been betrothed to Sybil before leaving "lady land," and now that his enterprise and patient labor had met its reward of easy competence, he had sent for Sybil and her widowed mother to share it with him.

"Come to get married!" there was a long pause, and the minister compressed his lips, and cast his eyes onward almost with an expression of scorn. It was unnoted by the inmates of that little room, the simple-hearted women and that brave, loving pair whose hearts were unchanged by time, labor and separation, and soon the good man arose, and with even more than his wonted impressiveness, united two who should from henceforth be eternally one. Those who have never known deep suffering are slow to detect its indications in others. Aunt Jane knew that her brother had in early life passed through a period of severe mental anguish, but he was now entirely calm, had been so for years, and she never imagined him to be otherwise than perfectly happy. Busted with the little genialities of every-day life, blessed with simple and ordinary desires, undisturbed by those ideal tendencies which so often embitter, at the same time that they ennoble the more imaginative, her life was placid as a heart full of content could make it. She saw fearful lines stamped upon the face of her brother, and supposed that study and the sanctities of religion were making their busy impress—she never dreamed that the sorrow of early life had been seared by the lapse of years into his very soul.

We have said he looked sternly upon the young people who stood before him. He did so, and yet Herman Vortenberg was a kind-hearted, genial man, who regarded the infirmities of others with the eye of true charity, while his own life was a perpetual reaching for that ideal standard recognized by the Great Master when he said, "Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect."



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The words were sung to a listless air, and so low as to be almost undistinguished, but the melody thrilled the very soul of the young student, while the words were graven upon the memory unconsciously at the time, but to become the material for after years of bitter reflection. He listened till the words died away, and then, overcome by emotion, he stepped out upon the terrace.  
The moon was calm and clear, and the night wind, fresh from the sweet south, gave another drop of in-

Trust it not, the idle story,  
Love hath no abiding here—  
Bubbles all are fame and glory,  
Nothing real but the tear.  
Smiles are false, and still deluding,  
Hiding withered hearts and secret;  
Fleets are they, for sighs intruding  
Usher in the coming tear.

and became a part of that sweet melody. For the first time in his life, he felt that the soul had other desires than that for knowledge, other pursuits than that of glory. He tried to arrest this unsuited current of thought, to compose himself to slumber, but in vain. At this moment, the faint notes of a song came to his ear. He listened with a tumultuous thrill. He hardly breathed. He felt as if his soul had suddenly been dissolved, and mingled

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The day of his return from the University, a small party were invited to his father's house; Bertha was of the guests. Nothing but ordinary civilities passed between them, and yet, when the youth retired to his pillow, he found the low tones of her voice lingering upon his ear, like a stray chord of music. For the first time in his life, he felt that the soul had other desires than that for knowledge, other pursuits than that of glory. He tried to arrest this unsuited current of thought, to compose himself to slumber, but in vain. At this moment, the faint notes of a song came to his ear. He listened with a tumultuous thrill. He hardly breathed. He felt as if his soul had suddenly been dissolved, and mingled

What wonder, then, that the fascinations of Bertha should fire the brain of the youthful and romantic student? At the time of his departure for the University she was a gay, beautiful girl, abounding in intellect, and holding as by a spell all who approached her. A mere boy, he had regarded her then with a sort of wonder, a something in which he had no concernment, beautiful, but remote. A few years his senior, she scarcely bestowed a glance upon the studious boy, who had never directed a stray regard to her face. In the short vacations he had been equally indifferent. Absorbed in his studies, he heard of her seductions just as he read of those of Helen or Cleopatra, beings who hitherto raised no emotion of sympathy.

for the dreams of the imagination, and thus fostered for the exercise of early emotion, left ample room of a student's life, while it afforded no opportunity lived by action or expression. The seclusion, too, and disturbs the soul of early genius, as yet unready to be full of that aimless enthusiasm that so often bewilders He had just left the University, high in honor, and the good and the true.  
The words were sung to a listless air, and so low as to be almost undistinguished, but the melody thrilled the very soul of the young student, while the words were graven upon the memory unconsciously at the time, but to become the material for after years of bitter reflection. He listened till the words died away, and then, overcome by emotion, he stepped out upon the terrace.  
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Herman Vortenberg was now a solitary man, waiting with patient faith for the good yet in store for him, and firmly and resolutely casting aside the shadows which the evils of early experience might rest upon his soul. He had once gathered the household gods about him; once, in the impetuosity of early passion, when the strong physical man is so apt to be misled by the seductions of beauty, it was then that beneath the green tree, like the idolaters of old, he set him up an altar and bowed in worship. Alas! for the highest divinity came not to the feast, and he quenched, even with his heart's blood and the soul's tears, the fires of his altar. Calmly, solemnly did he take it away, and alone in the sanctuary of his own soul bow down to the worship of the good and the true.

He was exact, almost stern in the discharge of his parochial duties, discoursing much upon the sanctity of all human affections, the care, the earnestness and devotion with which they should be fostered—the hazard of mistakes, the danger of abuse, and the fearful lethargy induced by worldliness and all ungenial influences. Upon subjects like these a strange eloquence grew upon him, a solemn majesty that went forth insuring itself amid his hearers, like the waving shadow of a great banner, moving to and fro, and giving boldness to the outlines of all things upon which the light falleth.

Marriage to him was a solemn and beautiful mystery, by which was typified that angelic existence in which the two were no longer twain, but one forever and forever in the Paradise of God. A marriage, to his high and spiritual mind, must be a marriage of hearts; a union of soul with soul; a high and holy communion, by which the faculties of the soul were fully to be developed, its repose secured, and the whole nature with all its manifold attributes brought into harmonious action. He was no dreamer, but a deep spiritual thinker, basing his life upon his insight of the Ideal. The revelations of great truths, brought out by the fervency of prayer, by fidelity to the good, by meek obedience to the indications of all spiritual discernments, all these were combined into great principles of action, earnest and unswerving.

At length their vows were pledged. Herman was an only son, the heir to wealth. Bertha had more than a competence. Worldly calculations were unthought of. He lavished upon her the fullness and freshness of a heart whose fountains she only had stirred, and Bertha—  
 As yet, Herman had no plan for life. To live that he might elucidate great truths, that he might be as a city set upon a hill in the highway of goodness, had hitherto been his ideal. Now, why should he not live to impart happiness to a human soul. Why would not the vast destiny of life be accomplished with him by devoting himself to one human being; to foster the true and ennobling, to develop the hidden mysteries of his and her heart; to go out into the temple of God in their own souls.  
 Bertha's clear intellect and imaginative character seemed to have acquired a new strength by association with the impassioned youth. Yet that strange calmness, that touching sadness was ever the same. *New thought* had been elicited, but the foundations of emotion were unmovable. Her lustreous eyes met his with the same look of dreamy tenderness, the faint smile yet played upon her lips, and that self-possessed gentleness was all unchanged. Yet there, even these, that might have aroused the suspicions wrought with stupendous power upon the unobedient student. The elements of her character were unlike his own, but it was the contrast that results in harmony. Her repose was refreshing to him. It supplied what was wanting in his own nature. It was like the dew imparting life and vigor to the plant scorched by the meridian sun.  
 They were wed. No change grew upon the youth. Bertha's affluence of thought was a never failing source of interest. Her gentle manners, her sweet playfulness of fancy, supplied an unending source of delight. Yet, in the midst of all this, a strange yearning grew upon the heart of the youth. A sense of chill even in the presence of his beautiful wife; a void unalleviated even by her tenderness.  
 Prone to metaphysical subtleties, he began to question the nature of his emotions. He believed that perfect human love would result in entire content—in soul-fulness. More than once had Bertha hinted at a former attachment, which he, with mis-taken magnanimity, had forborne to listen to, as a subject most painful to herself. He remembered, too, that he had more than once found her in tears, which she instantly suppressed, and met him with a smile such as could dwell on no other lips.  
 It was now his turn to smile sadly, to meet the gaze of Bertha with an aching tenderness; to feel how awful, even here, are the mysteries and revelations of the soul.  
 One evening he found Bertha in the library, bending over an old Lutheran Bible, discolored by time, yet its velvet covering and silver clasps betokened the care with which it had been preserved. It had belonged to one of the early reformers, and was re-

The building to his bewildered senses. The building was a low one of stone, covered with vines, and sheltered by trees of a primitive growth, which the taste of his forefathers had preserved in making the "clearing." The long sweep of these gigantic trees, in the dim light, gave a cathedral-like grandeur to the scene, and inspired emotions of love and religion.  
 The old vines that draped the building had been suffered to grow almost without pruning, and, in some parts, the terrace was nearly encumbered by their growth. Lifting up these, at an angle of the building, the songster was revealed to him, half reclining upon a low form, her eyes lifted to the moon, and bathed in tears. Obeying the first wild impulse of his heart, Herman rushed forward and knelt at her feet. She moved not, but her lustreous eyes fell slowly to the face of the youth, and their calm light entered his very soul.  
 "Bertha!"  
 She smiled faintly; there was more of sadness than of tenderness in that faint smile, and yet it was a blending of both. Who does not know of the fearful power that lurks in the self-possessed gentleness, the half-dreamy tenderness of a beautiful and inexperienced woman, when acting upon the young and mature man, when acting upon the young and inexperienced?  
 He seized her hand—he covered it with kisses. She did not repel him, and yet the smile died from her lips—a deep sigh escaped her, and she burst into tears.  
 The youth sprung to his feet. "Oh, God! I have offended you—you are unhappy, and I have added a new pang, I who would have died to serve you."  
 She took his hand in hers, and drew him to the seat beside her. Her tears dried away, and there, by that still light, her low, gentle tones of voice blended with the calm night, and "lapped him in Elysium." She spoke of the fickleness of human hearts, of the mockery of life, of its weariness, soul-sickening vapidity. It was a new theme to the student, with his fresh and untired nature. It stirred the deep fountains of his sympathy. He looked into her tearful eyes, listened to her low voice, and drunk in a strange and wild bewilderment.  
 When, at length, she arose to leave him, and her long curls, shading her cheek, revealed yet her pure spiritual brow and deep eyes; the youth seemed to forget that you have seen me, and may God bless you."  
 "Go, Herman," she whispered, "forget this night, a wake to a sense of life and bereavement."  
 The student slept none that night. A new life had been revealed to him. He wondered at his former existence, so cold and unreal, and hour after hour did he pace his lonely room, thinking of Bertha. Bertha would have left the farm-house the next day, but the good mother of Herman saw that he desired her stay, and she playfully commanded her to abide. Week after week the youth yielded to her fascinations. A new meaning was revealed to him in the aspect of nature, and the language of poetry, and Bertha seemed to hold the key that unlocked

garded with great reverence by the family. She did not look up when Herman entered, and he thought her lost in pleasant reverie over the interesting relic. When, however, he approached her, he saw her face was bathed in tears, and she was engaged in reading the answer of Jesus to the materialists of those days. Placing her finger upon the text, she raised her eyes slowly to his face, and repeated, in a voice scarcely above a whisper,

"Whose wife shall she be in the resurrection?"

Herman turned ghastly pale; a cold sweat started upon his brow, he staggered to a seat, and covered his face with his hands.

Bertha shuddered; she knelt down, and laid her head upon his knee, looking upward with that mysterious, sad face, now pale and passionless as marble. At length, she heaved a deep sigh, and fell senseless to the floor.

Herman placed her upon a couch and bathed her cold face, till the sad eyes opened and met his agonized expression.

"Oh, Herman, Herman! I have committed a deadly sin, in that I swore, before God, to love and honor you, while my love, eye the deep love of a strong woman's strong nature, had been that of another. I have never dared to call you husband. I have entreated you to call me Bertha, for the name wife has been too holy for me to respond to."

A fierce light grew in the eyes of the wronged man, as he listened to these fearful words. He grasped her wrist convulsively, and looked sternly into her pale face.

"Woman, tell me solemnly, before God, if you felt all this at the time you consented to be mine."

"No, on my soul, dear Herman, I did not even then know the whole extent of my love for another—another, with all his worth and manhood, now in his grave;" and she covered her face with her hands and burst into tears.

"Bertha, you have mocked me; you have perjured your own soul, and plunged me into everlasting misery. You have bound us with cords that death only can sever, while we must from henceforth be as strangers to each other."

A shriek, wild and piercing, burst from the lips of the wretched woman, and she once more relapsed into insensibility. Herman again bathed her brow, unconsciously murmuring, "Oh, God, so beautiful, and yet so wretched—so noble, and yet so weak!"

"Weak, most weak!" responded Bertha, without unclosing her eyes. "But, Herman, even truth must be gradually unfolded to the mind. The blessed Savior recognized the weakness of human understanding when he said, 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now,' and he fulfilled his great mission, leaving these things unsaid. Is not the mystery of marriage one of these things? Is the human mind, even after the lapse of centuries, prepared to receive the true doctrine?"

Again, Herman found himself listening to the eloquence of those sweet lips, content to live upon the honey of words so purely framed, and again he forgot the mysterious sadness and the tranquillity of

sealed.

"Dear Herman, those truths have been growing upon me; slowly but surely unfolding themselves to my mind. At the time of our contract, I was a solitary being, yearning for sympathy. I would have been content as your friend, your sister, but your vehemence forbade that. I was fearful of losing you altogether. I thought love was a thing to be conquered, to be transferred even."

"Bertha—"

"Herman, I must say all now, it is better for both."

"Go on, go on."

Again she shuddered, and clasped her hands upon her breast, as if to keep back her emotion.

"I thought, Herman, that old things would pass away, forgetting that material things only perish in the using, while love is indestructible and eternal, growing brighter and brighter unto the perfect day."

"Bertha, you drive me mad. You, who love me not, can talk in this wise, while I, I who have expended my whole soul upon you—" And he paced the room with clenched hands.

Most gently did Bertha exercise her powerful ministry. "No, Herman, yours is not love. It is an intellectual admiration, a content in thought, a gratified imagination, but love is more than this. It is too intangible for denement, yet the soul knoweth its presence by its fullness of content in the beloved. Herman, let me say all. I had not been able to detect its tokens, till I found I would sooner lose you, Herman, than lose the memory even of my buried love."

"Oh, God! oh, God! is this life!" exclaimed the unhappy man.

"It is fearful, Herman, the weakness, not the vice, of our nature that has brought this upon us. I have endured this, dear Herman, and even more."

Both were, for a long time, silent.

"Then, this doctrine of the true marriage has been a gradual revelation," said Herman; "you did not, could not, understand these things in their present light, and yet consent to take such fearful vows upon yourself."

"Never, never. Oh, God! Herman, to souls like ours, made to discern the truth, such vows, where the two are not one in spirit, truly and entirely one before God, are a fearful desecration. It is mockery of that holiest of all Divine appointments."

"True, most true." He grasped her arm with a strong grasp, and replied, huskily, "yet we are bound in the light of human institutions—bound till death, death, shall sever the bonds. Bound by human ties, though from henceforth strangers upon earth," and he fell headlong to the floor.

Long and fearful was the malady that followed this terrible explanation. Bertha watched over his couch with sister-like assiduity, preserving her calm gentleness of demeanor, even while others were blanched with fear. Often and often, in the silence of his slumber, did she kneel down and pray that the bitterness of his cup might be assuaged. Often, in the wildness of his delirium, did she respond with some

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SONNETS TO

IV.  
Come, dearest, to my heart. My soul and thine  
A strange, ethereal, soft attraction feel;  
Where'er I rove, my thoughts to thee incline,  
Whatever my purpose, still to thee I kneel;  
If in the temple to my God I kneel;  
My prayers for pardon blend with prayers for thee;  
If on my senses slumber sets her seal  
My dreaming spirit seeks thee, wild and free;  
If in each other's presence blessed we stand,  
Nearer and nearer still with smiles we move,  
Soul melts with soul, as hand is joined in hand—  
And thro' and thro' attest the lordstar Love—  
Bright, burning mystery; unknown to art,  
But ever gently thus attracting heart to heart.

III.  
Come, dear one, smile consent! Thy fair young brow  
Was never arched for stern Demial's frown—  
Could angels glance like April sunbeams down  
From their high thrones, where burning splendora glow,  
To this cold sphere, cloud-mantled, far below,  
As April's sun awakes the budding flower  
And from its sweet cup quaff the dropping shower,  
Warmed by their breath would young Love's roses glow,  
From Feeling's flushing cheek they'd kiss the tear,  
And words of comfort to the worn heart tell—  
And art not thou, my life, their sister dear!  
Then in thy soul let kindred kindness dwell—  
Unfold the wings stretched o'er thy bosom fair  
And let my wearied spirit nestle there!

I.  
Now tripping forth, the fairy-footed Spring  
A wakes bud and bloom, and, liberal, fills  
The air with balm, manning the sunny hills  
With living green. The purple martens wing  
Their wheeling course, and, twittering sharply, sing  
In treble notes a strange and keen delight,  
And as they upward soar in airy flight,  
Shrill through the sapphire arch their peans ring.  
Oh sweetheart mine! shall I unfold the theme  
Bird, bud and blossom teach our swelling hearts?  
Thy tell-tale blush replies; Nor idle deem  
Nor slight the lesson Nature thus imparts,  
While even Zephyr from his flight above,  
Stooping to kiss thy cheek, sighs tenderly of Love!

II.  
Nay, chide me not that I am jealous, love,  
For in my dotting fondness I am grown  
A very miser of the beauties thrown  
Profusely round thee from the gods above:  
I'm even jealous of the pliant glove  
Embracing oft thy slight and fairy hand,  
And of sly Zephyr, with his whisper bland,  
Who steals a-wooling from the budding grove  
And dallies o'er thy cheek with soft caress,  
And of the ray that trembles as it glows  
Upon thy fresh lips' rosy loveliness—  
For that dear hand I would with mine enclose,  
And lip and cheek I would were mine alone,  
And mine the only heart that thou wouldst wish to own.