

THE COURTSHIP OF JONATHAN QUIGGS.

JONATHAN QUIGGS was a well-dressed bachelor, of middle age, and select tastes. He was floor-walker in a large drapery establishment, and was particularly attentive to well-dressed young lady customers.

The lady customers—particularly those of an uncertain age—frequently smiled on Quiggs, and the polite Quiggs invariably smiled on them in return. It was his business to do so, as well as his inclination; for Quiggs, although a ripe middle-aged bachelor, had not by any means dismissed from his romantic mind the consideration of matrimony. His mind was highly sentimental in tone, and his heart was quite young, having nothing in common with the iceberg feelings of your theoretical bachelor, whose sawdust heart

has shrunk through disuse into the condition of a dried speldring.

At the same time, it must be admitted that Quiggs had no immediate intention of marriage. He was hopefully waiting his chance, and had been gracefully posing for many years back as a sort of starched and pomaded matrimonial Micawber, on the hopeful look-out for some beautiful heiress, or perhaps a rich young Chancery ward.

But the years were passing on, and the beautiful heiress had not yet turned up, and Jonathan Quiggs still remained an elaborately starched and pomaded bachelor, the jest of young maids, and the hope of old.

Time, however, brings many surprises, and Quiggs, the romantic bachelor of forty-five summers, fell deeply and suddenly in love.

In his younger years, Quiggs had seen and adored numerous beautiful girls; but never, surely, had he ever beheld such a peerless beauty as this! He had often been—well, yes, he would admit it—in love to a certain extent; but never had he been in love like this! He was intoxicated; took to writing poetry; lost his appetite, and went completely off his dinner; but the martyrdom was an exquisite one, and Quiggs daily bloomed, literally bloomed, in flowers, yellow kids, and spotless shirt-front.

But who was the fair enslaver?—the dazzling Venus whose fair face had thus put Quiggs off his quarter-of-a-pound of dinner sausages?

Wilhelmina Rose-ina Mumford was a milliner and dress-maker, who had quite recently taken apartments in a tenement directly opposite Quiggs's bedroom window.

Wilhelmina had a lovely complexion—the rose and the lily combined—and the first accidental glimpse of her, as she sat sewing at her window, had given Quiggs the sensation of a drink of hot treacle. He read his destiny in that single glance—he was in love; he was a candidate for

matrimony; his long-deferred fate was there and then sealed!

The window at which Wilhelmina usually sat at once became a source of indescribable charm to him. It was in Quiggs's eyes the most interesting and special window in the whole street. It was pleasant to look at even in Wilhelmina's absence; but when the loved one sat and sewed there, it was a perfect paradise!

By a process of reasoning easily explainable under the tender circumstances, Quiggs, who loved poetry, found himself hourly repeating Hood's analogous poem of

"OVER THE WAY.

"Alas! the flames of an unhappy lover,
About my heart, and on my vitals prey;
I've caught a fever, and I can't get over,
Over the way!

"My wasted form ought of itself to touch her;
My baker feels my appetite decay;
And as for butcher-meat—oh, she's my butcher!
Over the way!"

In point of fact, Quiggs had quite a severe attack of "over the way," and it brought him into trouble and expense in various ways, besides "over the way."

In the first place, he was fifteenpence extra every week for shirt-fronts, cuffs, and collars, and a good deal more for scent-bottles and hair pomades. Besides, he was compelled—actually compelled—by the warmth of his feelings to purchase a second-hand opera-glass at a cost of 2s. 6d., for the express and sole purpose of bringing the beloved one nearer to him when both were seated at their respective windows.

His appetite for the beautiful, however, was not appeased thereby one whit, but rather grew with what it fed on. So much, indeed, was this the case, that Quiggs's jealousy fairly got the better of his judgment, and his misgivings

were confirmed when one day a rival, as he wildly imagined, suddenly appeared on the scene.

It was a beautiful summer Saturday afternoon, when Nature was robed in her gayest attire. The window flower-boxes were in full-bloom; the city sparrows flitted from house-top to house-top; the street-organs discoursed their sweetest strains; the house-flies buzzed playfully against the window-panes, and all was peaceful, bright, and gay.

Quiggs, sitting at his window on the beautiful afternoon in question, opera-glass in hand, had Wilhelmina delightfully focussed, when, ah! he witnessed—yes, actually witnessed—an elderly person—he wouldn't call him a gentleman—stop right before Wilhelmina's window, and—look up!

Quiggs was horror-stricken. With Othello rising in his breast, he first dashed down his opera-glass, and then dashed down the stair.

In three seconds he had crossed the street, and reached the unconscious Cassio of the play, who was an elderly gentleman, carrying gold spectacles and a silk umbrella.

"Y—y—your business, villain?" seizing the old gentleman by the throat.

"Looking for lodgings!" gasped out the terrified victim.

"Ah, 'tis well!—'tis well I find not Cassio's kisses on her lips!" and loosening his hold of the victim, Quiggs hurried back to his window, and his—opera-glass.

It is needless to remark that the staid old gentleman made instant tracks from the spot, concluding that lunatics were most certainly about, and that unprotected walking in that neighbourhood was extremely dangerous.

In yet another way, Quiggs's "over-the-way" mania brought him into trouble. His daily duty was the onerous one of directing customers of both sexes, but principally the fair sex to the different departments, where their wants would be supplied.

Now, Wilhelmina Rose-ina Mumford was an ever-present fact in Quiggs's mind. Her beautiful shadow haunted him by night and day, and toned his every thought, so that very frequently in replying to questions asked by customers and others as to where such-and-such goods were to be had, Quiggs, wrapped in visions of Wilhelmina sitting sewing at her window, would reply, without hesitation, "Over the way!"

This laconic advice was in several instances construed by customers in a strictly literal sense, who, withdrawing from the premises, effected their purchases, according to instructions, in a flourishing opposition house on the opposite side of the street.

Yes, Wilhelmina was a bewitching fact; and at length poor Quiggs was morally certain that in her, his beautiful ideal, he had at last met his long-delayed fate!

Wilhelmina Rose-ina Mumford!—how he luxuriated in the sonorous cadences of that highly classic name! He knew that was her dear, sweet name; because, had he not read and admired it in secret, a hundred times over, on the close-mouth, where it read in gold letters:—

"MISS WILHELMINA ROSE-INA MUMFORD,

"Milliner and Dressmaker.

"1 Stair up."

Wilhelmina was a prize; further delay might be dangerous; villainous Cassios might be about, where so much captivating beauty was thoughtlessly exposed at a front window!

He seriously thought out the position. He had not yet had a formal introduction to Wilhelmina, but there were other ways of reaching the fair one's ears and heart. The post-office was safe and handy; so he resolved to conduct his romantic courtship by letter.

Once decided, Quiggs was neither slow nor bashful in preferring his suit, backed by an immediate offer of his heart and hand:—

“MY DEAREST WILHELMINA ROSE-INA”—(he wrote),—
 “Were, oh, were you ever loved by a member of the ruder
 sex? I hope not, although your personal attractions render
 the wild hope futile. If, however, your charming heart is
 at present ‘to let’—I mean *unoccupied*—kindly, oh kindly
 say so. For I, Jonathan Quiggs, love you dearly, and have
 long pined—now three weary weeks!—for the blessing of
 your hand. Will you, oh, will you, be mine? Tell me by
 return of post, and meantime accept of these dumb kisses as
 so many warm tokens of my love [here followed half a page-
 ful of small crosses], and believe me,

“Your devoted adorer,

“JONATHAN QUIGGS.’

Quiggs posted this gushing love-epistle at half-past ten
 that same night, and next evening, on returning to his lodg-
 ings, he found a reply-letter awaiting him. It was a
 delicious morsel to handle and to look at; for it was encased
 in a pink envelope, and emitted all the blissful scents of
 “Araby the blest.”

“From Wilhelmina!” he exclaimed, as he slit the top
 of the envelope with his penknife. “Yes, from darling
 Wilhelmina!” and delightedly he perused its contents:—

“MY SWEET JONATHAN,—You ask me, was I ever loved
 by a man, and I reply, ‘Yes, I *were!*’ by hundreds!—[‘Ah!’
 sighed poor Quiggs, ‘I too truly guessed so; dreadful! dread-
 ful!’]—But I never, never loved one in return, *except you*.
 [Here Quiggs literally smiled from ear to ear.] You
 ask me, will I be yours? and I answer, *I will!* My heart,
 my hand, and my purse are all at your sweet disposal.
 Name, oh, name the happy day!

“Oh! look not in my eyes love,
 They tell a tale too true;
 See not my blushes rise, love,
 Nor listen to my sighs, love,
 For blushes, sighs, and eyes, love,
 All speak—all speak for you!

“Yours for ever,

“WILHELMINA ROSE-INA MUMFORD.

(Here followed three pages of small X kisses, and a post-script longer than the letter itself, warning Quiggs to be secret and careful, as she had a dear mamma who was the sworn enemy of all lovers—Jonathan Quiggs included—and who wouldn't on any account, tolerate a single visit.)

“Well, that's certainly comforting!” exclaimed Quiggs. “Assuredly, I have the prospects of a beautiful mother-in-law, with a fine temper, too,—the old Gorgon! But faint heart never yet won fair lady; and I'll carry off my beloved Wilhelmina in spite of her mamma's watchful care. A romantic and spirited elopement instantly put into execution is the proper thing to do. I'll elope with the fair one to-morrow night, taking the express train—to Paisley!”

Thus resolved, Quiggs hastily wrote a second note—a note of secret assignation—in which he warned his Wilhelmina to prepare and hold herself in instant readiness, as he had resolved to elope with her—heart, hand, and purse—on the following night, at eight o'clock prompt!

By way of consent, Wilhelmina sent him over her check-key, so as to facilitate matters on the following fateful evening.

Quiggs was in raptures, and did everything but push round the hands of the clock to hasten on the happy hour of—elopement!

By six o'clock he stood ready, stiff with cuffs, collar, and shirt-front.

When half-past seven came round, he could stand it no longer, and, sticking his hat on his head, he dashed across to Wilhelmina's residence, and presently reached the door.

Without stopping to knock, Quiggs instantly applied the check-key, and presently found himself in a short lobby, and immediately afterwards he stood in the actual presence of his fair enslaver!

Wilhelmina was seated before a small looking-glass, arranging her personal toilet.

“Half-an-hour too soon!” she exclaimed, with a gasp, turning half round on her chair.

Quiggs rushed up and seized her in his fond arms.

Her left cheek was *red*, he saw; her right cheek *white*!

“You blush on the one cheek, my dearest Wilhelmina?”

“The side of my heart, dear? Can you, oh, can you draw an inference?”

“I can, my dear, and a champagne cork, too!” answered Quiggs, and kissing her warmly on the blushing cheek, his lips left a white stain, and—*he thought he smelt paint!*

Just at that perplexing moment, the piercing voice of his prospective mother-in-law was heard crying aloud:—

“Wilhelmina! Wilhelmina! come here instantly!”

“Not this time,” cried back the gallant lover; “it’s death, or *Paisley!*” And, catching up the fair one in his fond arms, Quiggs rushed blindly down stairs, heedless of the screams of Wilhelmina, who yelled out:—

“Stop! stop! for goodness sake! My leg! my leg!”

“Wh—wh—what’s the matter with your leg, dearest?” asked Quiggs, depositing his fair burden against a lamp-post at the close-mouth. “Rheumatism—eh?”

“Oh dear, no!—not that! not that! I’ve left it in the room—standing against the mantelpiece!” blushed the fair one.

“Ah!” gasped Quiggs, “and your purse, Wilhelmina, your purse?”

“Oh, it’s all right; it’s here,” slapping her dress-pocket.

“How much, dearest?”

“Seventeen and sixpence!” answered the beautiful heiress.

“Seventeen and sixpence, and a wooden leg! Christopher Columbus!”

In less than no time, Quiggs had replaced the fair heiress in her own room, and taken French leave of the premises, with a lot of the romance taken out of his mind.

“Oh, you vile deceiver!—you wolf in sheep’s clothing!” the deserted Wilhelmina cried after him; “you miserable sixteen-shilling-a-week counter-louper! Deceived! deceived! deceived! O-ho! o-ho! o-ho!”

But Quiggs went off, and returned not.

Three weeks after he was served with a legal notice of *Munford v. Quiggs*, in a breach of promise case, the damages being laid at £500.

Quiggs failed to appear, and a warrant of apprehension was issued against him.

The sheriff’s officer went for Quiggs, and Quiggs went to America.

The case is still unsettled; so is Quiggs. Wilhelmina is still unmarried; so is Quiggs. She hopes she may yet catch him; so does Quiggs!