Their wedding journey

Howells William Dean
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Author: Howells William Dean

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THEIR WEDDING JOURNEY.

I.

THE OUTSET.

They first met in Boston, but the match was made in Europe, where they afterwards saw each other; whither, indeed, he followed her; and there the match was also broken off. Why it was broken off, and why it was renewed after a lapse of years, is part of quite a long love-story, which I do not think myself qualified to rehearse, distrusting my fitness for a sustained or involved narration; though I am persuaded that a skillful romancer could turn the courtship of Basil and Isabel March to excellent account. Fortunately for me, however, in attempt-
ing to tell the reader of the wedding-journey of a newly married couple, no longer very young, to be sure, but still fresh in the light of their love, I shall have nothing to do but to talk of some ordinary traits of American life as these appeared to them, to speak a little of well-known and easily accessible places, to present now a bit of landscape and now a sketch of character.

They had agreed to make their wedding-journey in the simplest and quietest way, and as it did not take place at once after their marriage, but some weeks later, it had all the desired charm of privacy from the outset.

"How much better," said Isabel, "to go now, when nobody cares whether you go or stay, than to have started off upon a wretched wedding-breakfast, all tears and trousseau, and had people wanting to see you aboard the cars. Now there will not be a suspicion of honey-moonshine about us; we shall go just like anybody else,—with a difference, dear, with a difference!" and she took Basil's cheeks between her hands. In order to do this, she had to run round the table; for they were at dinner, and Isabel's aunt, with whom they had begun married life, sat substantial between them. It was rather a girlish thing for Isabel, and she added, with a conscious blush, "We are past our first youth, you know; and we shall not strike the public as 'bridal, shall we? My one horror in life is an ev-
ident bride."
THE OUTSET.

Basil looked at her fondly, as if he did not think her at all too old to be taken for a bride; and for my part I do not object to a woman’s being of Isabel’s age, if she is of a good heart and temper. Life must have been very unkind to her if at that age she have not won more than she has lost. It seemed to Basil that his wife was quite as fair as when they met first, eight years before; but he could not help recurring with an inextinguishable regret to the long interval of their broken engagement, which but for that fatality they might have spent together, he imagined, in just such rapture as this. The regret always haunted him, more or less; it was part of his love; the loss accounted irreparable really enriched the final gain.

“I don’t know,” he said presently, with as much gravity as a man can whose cheeks are clasped between a lady’s hands, “you don’t begin very well for a bride who wishes to keep her secret. If you behave in this way, they will put us into the ‘bridal chambers’ at all the hotels. And the cars—they’re beginning to have them on the palace-cars.”

Just then a shadow fell into the room.

“Wasn’t that thunder, Isabel?” asked her aunt, who had been contentedly surveying the tender spectacle before her. “O dear! you’ll never be able to go by the boat to-night, if it storms. It’s actually raining now!”

In fact, it was the beginning of that terrible storm of June, 1870. All in a moment, out of the
hot sunshine of the day it burst upon us before we quite knew that it threatened, even before we had fairly noticed the clouds, and it went on from passion to passion with an inexhaustible violence. In the square upon which our friends looked out of their dining-room windows the trees whitened in the gusts, and darkened in the driving floods of the rain-fall, and in some paroxysms of the tempest bent themselves in desperate submission, and then with a great shudder rent away whole branches and flung them far off upon the ground. Hail mingled with the rain, and now the few umbrellas that had braved the storm vanished, and the hurtling ice crackled upon the pavement, where the lightning played like flames burning from the earth, while the thunder roared overhead without ceasing. There was something splendidly theatrical about it all; and when a street-car, laden to the last inch of its capacity, came by, with horses that pranced and leaped under the stinging blows of the hail-stones, our friends felt as if it were an effective and very naturalistic bit of pantomime contrived for their admiration. Yet as to themselves they were very sensible of a potent reality in the affair, and at intervals during the storm they debated about going at all that day, and decided to go and not to go, according to the changing complexion of the elements. Basil had said that as this was their first journey together in America, he wished to give it at the beginning as pungent a national character as possible, and that