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Wedding Anniversary
OF
Mr. and Mrs. John Perrigo,
AT
FREEVILLE, N. Y.,
February 8, 1888.

PUBLISHED BY M. A. PERRIGO.

WILKES-BARRE, PA.:
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Their Golden Wedding.

Mr. and Mrs. John Perrigo Celebrate the
Fiftieth Anniversary of Their Marriage.—
A Sketch of Their Lives.

Among the events connected with family histories there seem none more fitting to observe than the well-rounded period of fifty years of married life, the more so that so few heads of families are permitted the realization of so long a term of wedded felicity. The children of Mr. and Mrs. John Perrigo, desiring to give their parents a friendly visit and hand-shake with old neighbors and friends, arranged to meet for that purpose at Mr. and Mrs. O. H. Hill's, Freeville, on Wednesday, February 8, 1888, on which occasion some fifty or sixty persons were present, and to all appearances took a lively interest in all that tended to make the day rich with enjoyment and full of kindly remembrance. A bountiful repast was served and then followed music, and Mrs. Chas. Collins, of Cortland, after stating that having been asked to write a poem, sing a song or make a prayer suitable for the occasion—"just as though one poor mortal could do all these"—said she would do neither, but would instead tell a bit of a story, which was as follows:

The time was February of the year 1838; place, Ames, a quiet little village in the state of New York, on Bowman's Creek, one of the tributaries of the Mohawk.

Taking a story-teller's privilege and allowing fancy to supply the missing links of fact, we mention that it was a bright winter day, with enough snow spread around to tuck up all the outside world safely as in a blanket, and cold sufficiently penetrating to call for care in the selection of "backlogs" and a judicious piling up of big sticks of wood in the wide-mouthed fireplaces in the "front room," living room and kitchen of Squire Mudge's house. They could get up a glorious blaze in those old-fashioned chimneys—one that would cook you brown on the "nigh" side while you were slowly congealing on the "off."

In the modest dwelling referred to there were signs of unwonted activity. The busy household was astir earlier than usual. The house was set in holiday order; everything scourable had received an extra polish, from the white floors to the brass candlesticks and the tops of the andirons. The odor of savory cookery penetrated the cold chambers, flew up the wide chimneys and floated abroad on the frosty air.

The Squire, arrayed in his go-to-meeting suit, his usual reflective pose of head rendered impossible by the stiffest of stocks and the most poignant of shirt collars, pervaded the house, endeavoring to make himself useful by looking after the fires, and the paths from gate to door and from house to barn. His wife's round, rosy face was overshadowed by care and a new dress cap. There was Ebenezer, the eldest boy, and his young wife; Charles, the jolly son of the family, full of his jokes and merry pranks, and especially full on this morning; Harriet, in a flutter of girlish curiosity and interest; Byron and Romeyn, young lads, ubiquitous as only small boys can be on occasions of unusual hurry and excitement, and last, and in point of interest, the central figure, there was Elizabeth getting ready for her wedding. We think

Hannah must have assisted her—laced her petite figure into the primmest and most restrictive of “stays,” buttoned the buttons, joined together reluctant hooks and eyes, arranged the luxuriant hair in the highest top-knot possible, adding as a final bulwark and defense, across the back of the head a mighty wall of comb. Some particulars as to costume have been handed down to us which enable us to see her in “our mind’s eye” very plainly. She was a clear brunette, small and slim, with rosy cheeks, bright black eyes, white teeth, and hair so dark as to look blue black in a strong light. A brown silk dress with full skirt, “mutton-leg” sleeves, small shoulder cape like the gown, a round waist finished with a wide belt which was fastened in place by an imposing “slide,” a broad hem-stitched collar of fine lawn, feet encased in white stockings and slippers—there she stands! And how about the “Conquering Hero” when he comes? Ah, but he was fine to look at!—straight as an arrow, light built and graceful, with the trimmest of hands and feet—the best dancer in all the country round. He could draw a bow most movingly, and tell a story in a way to bring down the house. No wonder that Betsey surrendered. Fine he looked as he led her into the group assembled below at eleven o’clock on the morning of which we write. Nothing would do for him but a coat of the finest broadcloth with material enough to spare in the collar to have remedied the distressing tightness of the sleeves, had stern fashion and his tailor permitted such a liberty. His waistcoat was delicate in shade, but startling in pattern; his “pumps,” you may be sure, of the best in quality and make, for he had had a hand in their construction himself. Another of the things wherein he had achieved an enviable reputation being that of the finest maker of boots and shoes in those parts.

Do you see them as we draw back the curtain from this picture of fifty years ago? Can you hear the earnest tones of Elder Ross as he questions the groom as to his willingness to endow the young girl at his side with all his worldly goods?—catch his promise to love and cherish her in sickness and in health till death shall them part? And do you note her willing assent when asked if she will “love, honor and obey” the “party of the first part” of this contract? Observe how attentive is the group; how the young men and girls look serious, and the mother, for all she is so glad over her daughter’s prospective happiness, cannot keep back the tears at the thought that the loving care given so freely and unselfishly from infancy to womanhood will henceforth be of secondary importance in the life of her child. The good father’s heart, too, as he speaks words of advice and wise counsel at the close of the nuptial benediction, is so full that his voice trembles. Look and listen while you may, the scene will soon vanish away. To the young people present, and to the bride and groom, it is the earnestness of the words spoken that impresses them, rather than their meaning. It takes years and experience to bring these things home to us. They understand now what were the possibilities involved in this setting out on the untried and unknown. It is well to make merry, to adorn the bride, to spread the feast and to send the music of the wedding bells vibrating on the air. So much will come afterwards to sober, to sadden, to discourage, to try the patience and courage and endurance of these venturesome young travelers, they need that all cheering recollections should cluster about their point of departure. Do you remember how, at the close of Hiawatha’s wooing, when he sets out with his bride for his own land, how her father, the ancient arrow-maker,

"Turned again unto his labor,
 Sat down by his sunny doorway,
 Murmuring to himself, and saying:
 'Thus it is our daughters leave us,
 Those we love and those who love us.'
 Just when they have learned to help us,
 When we are old and lean upon them,
 Comes a youth with flaunting feathers,
 With his flute of reeds, a stranger
 Wanders piping through the village,
 Beckons to the fairest maiden,
 And she follows where he leads her,
 Leaving all things for the stranger!"

To return to our true story: Next came the wedding dinner, the memory of which lingers even to this day in the recollection of the survivors. They would call it a "wedding breakfast" now and the light of day would be shut out and the rooms illuminated. There would be diminutive sandwiches rolled and tied around with ribbon like a school girl's diploma; salads of mysterious and dreadful combination of beast, bird and fish, boned turkey, oysters and made dishes with all sorts of unpronounceable designations, jellies which never saw a bit of fruit, cream with as many stratifications as the earth's crust, and about as digestible and palatable as a portion of the same; Charlotte Russe; ices, sweet and sour; fruits in pyramids not to be eaten, and flowers in profusion only to be looked at, and silver, cut glass and China and elaborate serving. The modern Martha is driven out of her own kitchen, pantry and store room by the professional caterer who "comes down like the wolf on the fold" with an army of trained waiters uniformed with dress coats and white ties, and she doesn't dare offer a suggestion or express a desire for fear of running counter to the laws of the Medes and Persians, whose assistance she has invoked. But Martha, fifty years ago, planned

and carried out her own culinary triumphs. Our wedding party sat down around a square table to a "square" meal, you may be sure. One of Grandmother Dimmis's chicken pies, flanked by all sorts of vegetables, set off by preserves and pickles, and at the last there was a lovely plum pudding, together with the conventional "bride's loaf" and various other "sweetcakes."

"And how about the wedding presents?" some of you may ask, "and the trousseau of the bride?"

Well, she had the brown silk before mentioned, a purple worsted traveling dress, a pair of home-spun working gowns, one best bonnet, a Circassian cloak, not seal-skinny in price or quality. No underwear by the dozen, lace-trimmed and embroidered, be-ruffled and puffed, the despair of the professional laundry woman even. All her clothing would no more than comfortably fill that hair-covered trunk, with brass nail-head initials in the cover, which used to stand in grandfather's old garret. Look at our daughters to-day—"They toil not, neither do they spin, and yet Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these." In 1838 the "toiling and spinning" extended over weeks of pleasant anticipation, and was devoted to the manufacture of table and bed linen, towels, pillow-cases, blankets, quilts and the like. Aunt writes in reply to my question, "it was not the fashion to give bridal presents in those days, and my only gifts were a towel and a pretty pitcher from an English neighbor, who said it was the custom in the Old Country."

Well, the dinner was eaten, the good byes said, and the young couple departed with a merry quartette of friends to see them to their first halting place. "Rail-road? Lightning express? Palace car, with sleeper attached?" Oh, no! Bless you! There was the steam-boat and canal packet for summer travel, and the stage

and private conveyance for winter. They had to do without several things which modern lovers would hardly know how to dispense with. For instance, he never gave her his photograph—not even one of those old looking, glassy daguerreotypes—for their French inventor had not yet succeeded in utilizing the sunlight in that direction. Portraits on ivory were expensive and artists few. The very best he could have done would have been to give her a coal black “silhouette” of his fine profile, which she might have framed in a funereal frame and hung up beside her looking glass. There had been small need of letters to express themselves through living quite near each other. “Uncle Sam” charged twenty-five cents then whenever his assistance was invoked. They were spared the expense of telegrams, too, while the craziest inmate of an asylum in those days had never projected anything so utterly preposterous as two lovers “hallooming” at each other through a telephone. We shake our heads as we think of their deprivations and limitations, and feel that they must have found life a pretty humdrum affair and the world at its liveliest, a poky place. Change is writ on everything save human passions. The groom hired a horse and sleigh of some accommodating neighbor, we suppose, and they set off across country for a visit among his relatives and friends, who lived in Cayuga county. In the letter which he sent the other day, in answer to some of our queries, that honeymoon seemed to glow and shine still across the wide stretch of years.

Then there was the return, and the setting up for themselves, the modest beginning as to means, house room and furnishings. But they had youth and health, and whatever of difficulty or discouragement the future held in store for them, please God, they should meet it

together, and this is shield, spear and buckler to those just entering the arena of life.

Then came the removal to the rocks and evergreens of "Gridley Hollow" where, surely, they had opportunity to cultivate the domestic virtues without distraction from the outside world. Here came to brighten and gladden their home, the first baby. "Such a cunning little fellow he was!" writes the mother. "I dressed him in white the first year in low-neck and short-sleeve dresses, and he wore a close cap on his head which required three yards of lace to plait in the border!" My teeth chattered for him as I read and I instinctively moved up nearer to the register.

Another event worthy of note occurred about this time. They purchased a cast iron cooking stove which had an elevated oven, and discarded the bake kettle with hot coals on the cover, and even that latter improvement, a tin baker, which cooked by radiation before the open fireplace.

We are troubled now by what the French would call "an embarrassment of riches" when it comes to household conveniences. Every possible need is met by a patent *something*, and really individual ingenuity has no chance for development. As we recall the old mill where the young miller (he entered into matrimony and the milling business at about the same time), "tolled" his customers, and the little brown house near by, we are seized with an irresistible desire to go visiting as we read their early reminiscences of their life at the Hollow. They are sure to be glad to see us, and the young house-keeper is not one to be flurried by an unexpected arrival. Everything is in apple pie order. The floor scoured as white as soap and sand can make it (no visible means of support for carpet bugs, then!) There are six straight-

back chairs arranged around the room, with a fall-leaf table on one side, over which hangs a small looking glass ornamented across the top with a red and green landscape. In one corner is a cherry bureau. "Draw curtains" shade the lower part of the windows. A half-open cupboard gives us a glimpse of some blue and white dishes. In a recess of the room stands a lofty bed with a homespun counterpane over it and a white "valence" running around the lower part of the bedstead. Diminutive pillows encased in long linen slips repose peacefully at the head of the bed. No lace-covered spread, no crazy silk foot-rug, no intricate sheet and pillow "shams" to provoke sleepy husbands to deeds of violence and wives to reproachful remarks on the disorderly habits of men in general. No patent springs to send you up three feet into the air when you essay to lay your weary frame to rest, but a featherbed to engulf you and bury you out of sight and hearing of the rustling straw underneath its smothering softness.

There is the blessed baby lying in a low, red, wooden cradle which rocks and bounces him till his blood is sent tingling to his extremities; his face surrounded by a halo of cap-border; his bare arms and neck suggestive of Raphael's cherubs and the croup; a good strong draught from the door on one side encounters a crack in the floor and a loose window frame on the other; and yet, he's here to-day, apparently none the worse for the rigors of his infancy.

We have warm biscuits for tea (not baking powder, but cream) baked in that triumph of inventive art—the elevated oven; honey clear as amber. There is a "bird's-eye" linen cloth of mother's weaving on the table and the blue and white dishes are set out, the six new teaspoons shine resplendent beside the pewter teapot. There is a bowl

of raspberry preserve and we each take a little on our plate, and we have a maple sugar cake in honor of being company and a cup of strong green tea. And after supper we have a pleasant visit by the light of a tallow candle in a shining candle stick. And the young couple tell us now lonesome they get sometimes away from their old home and friends; and how much good it did them to get that last letter a month ago. John says he couldn't stand it sometimes, when the roads are bad and customers can't get to mill if it were not for Betsey and the baby. And Betsey says between her housework and her sewing, her spinning and knitting, making and baby-tending, and John coming in to his meals and at other times during the day, she manages to keep from thinking too much about her folk. And then we come away pondering on the old, old story, so oft repeated, so varied in details and yet so like in its general outline.

In old-fashioned romances, there was a certain stereotyped ending which reads thus—"And so they were married, and they lived happy ever after." And how has it been with this couple? Witness this gathering to-day to celebrate their completion of half a century of wedded life. Should we ask them, we feel sure they would say as they look on the unbroken circle of their children, and their eyes rest tenderly on their children's children, as they feel the warm hand-clasp of old friends and neighbors, and eye speaks to eye with an eloquence surpassing that of the tongue, that, on the whole, their ways have been ways of pleasantness, and their paths, paths of peace.

They have had the discipline which comes from losses and crosses, from trial and bereavement. Some of their nearest and dearest have found their heavenly avocations, and it has been hard to learn to do without the visible

comfort and support which their companionship afforded. They have learned of a verity that "riches have wings," and yet how much of enduring value remains!

This anniversary will be to all here assembled, a never-to-be-forgotten occasion. The frost on the heads of the bride and groom has not touched their hearts. It has been pleasant to them to recall their setting out together on this eventful journey which covers the wide space of fifty years. Pleasant to their children will it be to remember that this day found father and mother with their affections still warm, their minds vigorous, their bodily strength well preserved, and that they still had an interest, not only in the welfare of their own, but in whatever relates to the good of humanity at large.

