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HOW IT ALL HAPPENED

AND OTHER STORIES.

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BY LOUISA PARR
AUTHOR OF "DOROTHY FOX"

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“HOW IT ALL HAPPENED.”

RAT-TAT—that’s the postman—two letters for Mrs Olinthus Lobb, Cedar Villa, Putney, and Charlotte says, “If you please, ma’am, two letters for you.” Nonsense, I must be dreaming, and I shall awake to find myself still Miss Britannia Plummidge.

I have been married six weeks last Wednesday, and yet now, when anybody suddenly calls me Mrs Lobb, I have to pinch myself to make sure I am still flesh and blood. Ah! young people get accustomed to things quickly; but when you have been called by one name for forty-seven years, it seems impossible ever to change it. However, I’ve changed mine, by a miracle, for nothing short of one can effect a marriage in Binfield. I am sure I do not wish to speak against my native place. It is the sweetest village in England, and for maiden ladies a most advantageous locality as regards economy and society, but, in my present position, I may make bold to say it *has* one drawback. There are no bachelors in it; boys abound, promising youths

“How it all happened,” etc. I.

with nothing to do are not uncommon, but a man with position and an income, however small, is never seen in Binfield without a wife by his side. Is it any wonder then that I, not at all a beauty, should have some little bewilderment in identifying myself as wife of Olinthus Lobb, Esq., and mistress of Cedar Villa?

Now I am going to tell how it all happened. Pamela and I are the daughters of a Colonel in the army. He had retired as long ago as I can remember; and when he died he left us our little cottage and £60 a year. He denied himself many a comfort to do this, and the memory of our father is very dear to us. We tried to do as he would have wished us, and some years ago when Mr Thompson, a most respectable man, but a miller, offered me his hand and heart, Pamela said, "No, we have our father's position to maintain." So I had to decline, very reluctantly I must own, for he was a widower, and my heart seemed to long to take care of those two dear little girls. After that one offer I never got another, and I began to resign myself to what seemed my ordained portion. Not that this was an easy task, for I am not like Pam. She is a very extraordinary woman; indeed many people say she ought to be a man. Pam is one of those

people who never give way, and I really could not say which is strongest, her mind or her body, both being gigantic. If she has been walking about all day and is brought to confess that she *is* a little tired, the only way you ever see her take her ease is by sitting bolt upright in her chair. The suggestion of a sofa or couch would be met by a withering look of scorn, only to be produced by one of those long noses with a bump in the middle. Pam is very proud of the family nose. I have often looked at her when in repose—I mean after she has retired—lying with her arms crossed, really reminding one of those noble crusaders, or figures of the middle ages, one sees in cathedrals.

Things in this life go by contraries, else why was not I christened Pamela and she Britannia? Our mother so admired^m the novel, that she begged her first-born might be called by the heroine's sweet name. This was one of the few occasions on which my father gave way, but even then conditionally—that he should choose the name of the second; and he chose the name of Britannia, and, unfortunately, I was the second. When we were children he always called me *his* chick, and if we had a dispute he invariably whistled or hummed "Rule Britannia." But this did not last long, for no one could rule