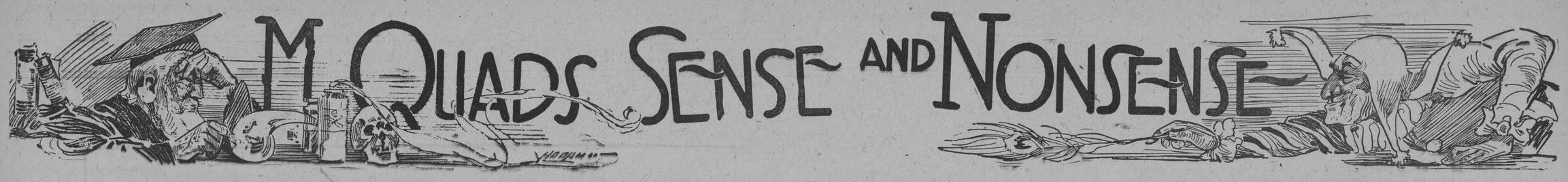


# Mrs. Bowser Tells It---A Week of Anxiety, But Relief at Last

MR. BOWSER'S ways are not always just as I could wish for, but I don't want to lose him.

He has his oddities, but he means well.

He talks about divorce just to scare me—that's all.

He's got an idea that if he shouts "Woman!" at me and waves his arms about he'll make me cuddle down.

He comes home with this scheme and that, and everything looks rosy to him until I bring figures to bear, but I am glad he is no pessimist.

I can generally catch on to his moods almost at once, but there are times when he is unreadable and worries me—when he isn't Mr. Bowser at all. When he got up last Sunday morning he didn't yawn and stretch and grunt and growl. On the contrary, he was unusually silent, and though his socks, collar, tie and collar buttons were scattered about the room, as usual, he recovered them without once declaring that this was the worst-run house in America. He usually growls about his Sunday breakfast, but on this occasion he hadn't a word of fault to find. I made no suggestion about his accompanying me to church and was utterly amazed when he announced his intention. I looked for a row when he came to dress, but there was none. He seldom or never puts on a fresh collar without blasting the laundryman's eyes, but on this occasion he even spoke of the work being nicely done. He didn't find the church too cold or too hot; the singing too loud or too low; the sermon too short or too long. He seemed well pleased, and he did not make one single kick over the Sunday dinner. He read aloud to me in the evening, and, though I corrected his pronunciation a few times, he did not lose his temper. I am somewhat worried over the change in him.

Monday—No kick as Mr. Bowser got up this morning. His collar button had rolled under the bureau, and he got down on his hands and knees and hunted it up without a swear word; found no fault with breakfast, although I thought the oatmeal was overdone; left the house in what seemed a happy frame of mind, and when he returned to dinner he brought no new fad with him. He sat down and read a book nearly all the evening, and when I showed him the gas bill that had been handed in during the day he remarked that it was very moderate for the time of year. I looked at him in amazement, but he smiled in return. Two politicians called to ask him to run for mayor, but he quietly refused, and would not even go to the nearest saloon to talk matters over. He complimented me on the way I manage the house, and inquired if my pin money was sufficient to carry me along. I wonder if anything is going to happen?

Tuesday—No kicks in the morning—no kicks at breakfast. The coffee was surely a little off, but Mr. Bowser said nothing about firing the cook through the window. He wore his old hat away by mistake, but he did not come home and blow me up about it. I was rather expecting to see him bring home a fire escape, a burglar alarm or a new idea in medicine chests, but he brought me a box of candy instead. The cook has observed his singular change, and is getting nervous over it. She says she had an uncle who made just such a sudden change and died within the week. No kicks during the evening. We played euchre, and I beat him eight games out of ten, but he did not call me a scoundrel and cheat. Indeed, he frankly acknowledged that I was too much for him. A fakir called at a late hour to try to sell Mr. Bowser a snide watch, but he wasn't even threatened. I have almost a mind to consult the family doctor about the case.

Wednesday—Still no kicks as he got out of bed. As he came down to breakfast I saw the cat look at him in a strange way, and the cook was really flustrated. No kicks over breakfast. As he went away he said he would bring home tickets for the theater and he left me dumb with astonishment. I felt a premonition of coming disaster all day, and when a street boy threw a stone and broke a window, I got ready to face the inevitable. There was no inevitable, however. When Mr. Bowser came home he said that such accidents were liable to happen at any time, and that I musn't worry over it. In going to the theater we had to stand up in the car, and were elbowed and jostled, and the conductor beat us out of 15 cents in making change, but Mr. Bowser made no kick. He was much interested in the play, and when we returned home he said he didn't know when he had spent such a pleasant evening. I was delighted, of course, but yet I felt a chill at my heart. Something awful is surely going to happen.

Thursday Morning—I got up before Mr. Bowser was awake and deliberately bid his socks in order to hear that old familiar kick from him, but it didn't come. He kept looking until he found them, and then laughingly remarked that the rats must have been frisking with them. I charged the cook to overdo his breakfast egg, but he did not seem to notice it. I scattered five or six clothespins in the front hall, expecting him to break out about reckless extravagance and the poorhouse, but he smiled blandly as he walked over them. I called to see the family doctor during the afternoon, but he could not clear up the mystery. He had known such sudden changes to mean death within a few days, and he advised me to be watchful. When Mr. Bowser came home from the office I had a poor dinner for him, and I also informed him that the coal was out and a water pipe leaking, but the soft, sweet smile never left his face. During the evening he said that he had made a fool of himself a hundreds times over since our marriage, but that he had solemnly determined to keep clear of fads in the future. The cook called me downstairs and wanted to know if Mr. Bowser wasn't going to carry on any more, and when I said it was doubtful she gave me a week's notice. Things had become too lonesome for her.

Friday—Same peaceful getting out of bed and eating breakfast. I insisted that he couldn't be well, but he replied that his health was never better. He had hardly left the house before I telephoned his symptoms to mother and asked her opinion. She replied that he would probably try suicide within a week, and that I had better lock up all the poison in the house. When he came home at night I was lying on the lounge and pretending to have a terrible headache. Instead of saying that it served me right for overeating or going around barefoot, and then whistling and stamping around to add to my suffering, he sat down and told me how sorry he was and did all he could to alleviate the pain. I had to get up and eat dinner with him, and pretended to be cured. We had a little spelling school during the evening, and, though I spelled him down a dozen times, he only smiled over it. I told him the cook had broken two plates that day, but he replied that all crockery was made to be broken. I asked for a new hat, and he gave me the money without a word about the poorhouse. I tried to get him to go to the club, but he said he preferred his own home. The cook went upstairs very much afraid, and I went to bed to dream of tragedies.

Saturday—Still no more morning kicks—no breakfast kicks. Mr. Bowser had only left the house when the cook packed up and followed. She said there were ghosts about. I telegraphed for mother to come, but she answered that it was impossible. I called on the doctor again, but he saw he could do nothing. I never put in a worse day in my life, and I was really ill when Mr. Bowser's step was heard at last. My heart bounded as I heard him dragging his feet. I thrilled as he banged the door open. I jumped up with a laugh as he flung down his hat in the hall. I realized that he was Mr. Bowser again. He stood there in the hall glaring around, and as I stepped into view he began:

"Woman, by the horn spoon, I want to know whether this is a poorhouse or a cooper shop!"

Then I fell upon his shoulder and wept. He had returned to himself. He was no longer someone else, but the real, genuine Bowser, and I sang a song of glad thanksgiving as he continued:

"You have driven me to the deadline, Mrs. Bowser, and I suggest that my lawyer see your lawyer and have a divorce arranged for us as quietly as possible!"

Oh! I'm so glad to hear you say that," I replied, as I hugged him the tighter.

"You are, are you? Then you are ready for a divorce?"

"Then—then it's like old times to hear you bluffing!"

"Bluffing. I'll show you!"

"Please do. Find fault with the cook."

"Hang her!"

"And the coal."

"You waste it to spite me!"

"And the gas bill."

"You—you burn it all day!"

"And now call mother names."

"Durn her hide!"

"And now—now."

"Look here, woman, what the devil does this mean?" he asked, as he held me off to get a look at me.

"Why—why you have been so quiet for a week that I thought—thought you would have to go to what they call the bughouse!"

"Oh, Lord!" he answered, and after a hearty laugh he kissed me right before the cook and the cat. I am a happy woman. Mr. Bowser is—is Mr. Bowser again.

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# Like a School Reader

HENRY H. JOHNSON began to hate cats when he was eight years old. He could get along with all other animals, but when it came down to cats he thirsted for their blood. They talked to him at home, at Sunday school and at his grandmother's funeral about his wicked way, but they couldn't change him. He would shed tears if a dog got a tack in his foot, or a woodchuck got an ear chewed off, but the cat that appealed to him for sympathy lost her tail in short order, or had an eye put out.

At the age of 12 Henry could figure up that he had made it hot for 540 cats, and they began to get so scarce in the state that a public meeting was called, and the people demanded that something must be done, just as they did in 1776. They were about to pass resolutions when a minister arose and said:

"Let us leave Henry to the care of Providence. The angels have had their eyes on him for some time, and they will not stand it much longer."

It was agreed to take this course, and thus the bad boy escaped having his neck twisted around over his shoulder by some desperate catowner, and for a time he went around bragging of the slaughter he was making; but a surprise party was due to him and the angels fixed it up as soon as they could take a little time from the Harvester Trust.

One dark and rainy night Henry H. was sent to the grocery after kerosene. He took his catkiller in one hand and started out bravely. Little did he suspect the job the angels had put up on him. As he turned the corner of the dense jungle he heard someone shout:

"Now, cats, he's your meat!"

The next moment he was down and yelling for help, but help there was none. At daybreak next morning they found his bones in a nice heap, and beside the heap a sign reading:

"He tasted fairly good! Next!"

James Schermerhorn at 12 years old was a bad boy. He wore his cap on the back of his head; he whistled Yankee Doodle on Sundays; he threw axes and crowbars at stray dogs, and if his mother sent him to the grocery to get a quart of molasses in a jug he would swing the jug around his head until the handle broke off. Mrs. Schermerhorn, who was a widow, talked with James many times about his wickedness, and assured him, with tears in her eyes, that if he did not mend his ways he would come to some sudden and awful end. He would promise her to become an angel, but an hour later he would be found getting up a fight between a dog and a goat, and betting two to one on the dog.

No boy can keep on being bad and making his widowed mother weep tears of sorrow without a climax coming. About the time he begins to think he's the worst boy in town and is proud of the fact a trap is laid for him. It was so in the case of James Schermerhorn. One day, after he had taken two steps out of the cellar stairs, so that his Uncle Thomas would have a fall when he went to carry a bag of potatoes down the cellar, he ran out into the street and hitched on to the back end of a wagon. The driver was a determined man with a wooden leg. He had fought in the Spanish War and was afraid of no boy.

"Young man, I allow no hitching on," he said as he turned and saw James climbing over the tailboard of the wagon.

"I am the bad boy who choked a bear to death with my naked hands!" replied James as he put on a bloody and sinister look.

"It's nothing to me how bad you are. Unhitch your hitch and get off my wagon or you will reap sorrow."

"I don't have to!"

Then the man who had fought in the Spanish War and killed thousands of Spaniards and buried them in unmarked graves, saw that he was defied, and that his reputation as a brave man was at stake. He stopped his horses so as to make a jump for James, and just at that moment the sawmill took fire, and an alarm was sent in, and a fire engine came galloping out. The defiant boy saw that he had gone too far, and all at once he let go his hitch and dropped into the street. The Spanish veteran cried out to him, but he only ran out his tongue and made up a face in reply. He did not know that the engine was close upon him until he was under the heavy wheels.

James Schermerhorn was carried home and laid on the bed. Several doctors poked away at him and said that he would never crawl under the canvas on circus day again. He was unconscious for several hours, but just before he died he opened his eyes, smiled at his weeping mother and whispered:

"I wish I had been a good boy and died of the yellow fever instead of this!"

It is hard work to be a good boy. There is no fun in it. You can't rob orchards or melon patches or break windows or peg the mayor with snowballs, but you will live on and be respected, and some day your fellow-men, tired of seeing you around so much, will elect you to the legislature and make your family proud of you.

Henry Harper was another sad case of how a boy can go wrong. Up to the age of eight he was praised on all sides for his goodness. Then a boy called Terrible Tom lent him an Indian story written by Bunt Nedline. It told how a lad nine years old ran away from home and went West to fight Indians. He killed over 200 and burned their villages and obliged their squaws to weave red blankets for him, and then he came home to be a bad boy. If his mother wept over his refusal to go to the grocery for a can of kerosene, he drew his scalping-knife and threatened to take her scalp. If his father took him by the collar to lead him out into the woodshed, he drew his tomahawk and uttered a war-whoop and was let alone.

One day, when the village constable started to arrest Henry as a desperado, the youth hid himself in a cider mill and threatened to burn every widow and orphan in the town at the stake if he was not let alone. They coaxed, and they threatened, but nothing would move the boy. At last, when his mother had become so perturbed that she could no longer keep up the monthly payments on her sewing machine, and when his father was looking out for a good place to jump into the mill pond and drown himself, there came a fatal day in this bad boy's history. No bad boy ever escaped that fatal day. It is as sure to come as that a city alderman gets rich on holding two terms of office.

A tin peddler drove into the village to sell his wares, and Henry Harper determined to add his scalp to his large and interesting collection. The peddler objected to being made a bald-headed man. Some folks were inclined to blame him, saying that the less hair he had the less money he would have to pay out for hair dye, but in defending his scalp he pushed Henry down an old well, and the boy was drowned before they could lower a rope to him. It is hoped that he repented of his badness before he died, but you never can tell. It was an awful fate to overtake a young boy, but what can you expect? A boy can kill off about so many Indians and terrorize about so many white folks, and then an old well or something else comes along, and he is a goner. This does not apply to red-headed boys in particular, but to all sorts of boys.

As a baby Hiram Winters was loved by all. He would just lie around on the floor or under the bed or in any other place and coo and smile and laugh and try to tickle his own fat feet. He was never known to keep his parents awake o' nights, and if his mother gave him the butcher knife or a box of matches to play with while she went visiting, he never attempted to cut his young throat or set the house on fire. Thousands of people said that he would live to be president of the United States and an honor to his parents, and it did look that way for a time; but, alas, he had hardly learned the alphabet when he got hold of an Old Sleuth book and started on his downward career. He determined to be a great detective and a desperate man, and his young and brief career was full of adventure and excitement. He was only seven years old when he arrested his mother for an assassin. Then he collared his father on suspicion of being a highway robber. For two years he was on the trail of everybody. He was talked to and argued with and licked in vain. They put him in jail and he dug out. Other sleuths hunted him, and he escaped. He called himself the Midnight Shadow of Shadowville, and he boasted that no criminal could escape him.

Hiram had rendered himself a terror when fate determined to bring him low. His father started out with the kerosene can one night to visit the grocery, and Hiram took his trail. He had a suspicion that his parent was going to rob a bank and he wanted to catch him in the act. He was skulking along the street with a dark lantern in one hand and a revolver in the other, while he had a pair of handcuffs in his hind pocket, when a wire-fence man came driving into the town on a gallop and ran the boy down. He wasn't killed outright, but lingered along for two weeks. During this time he sent for other boys and talked to them with tears in his eyes. He told them that goodness was a good thing to live by, and that they couldn't make a cent out of badness, and that if he had his life to live over again he would go to Africa and make the heathen stand on their heads with goodness or know the reason why. Then he died, and they planted catnip and hollyhocks on his grave, but to this day they speak of him as "that bad boy Hiram," and they point to his case to warn other boys against following in his footsteps.

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# Hans, The Cobbler

NEITHER dot little German tailor, nor der druggist, nor der plumber gifts me der idea. I make oop her all alone out of my own head. She vhas great. She vhas a sooccess.

I belief I shall catch on to America all right.

In my window I hang a big sign dot says:

"Come in and I shall tell you a story."

Der first woman in vhas feefty years old, und she brings in a shoe to be fixed oop and sits down und sighs und says:

"Vhell, Cobbler, go ahead."

Und I cough und cough und says:

"Once upon a time dere vhas a woman who had got to be feefty years old. She vhas a married woman, but she don't have such happiness mit her husband. She works hard, und she lives poor, und not one time in five years does she go by der theater or a picnic. Once in a great while she laughs, but most always she has tears in her eyes."

"Why, dot vhas shust like my case!" says der womans.

"Dis poor womans keeps right on being sad." I says, "und she don't belief she vhill ever have some good times in dis world, vhen she goes out in der forest one day to gather fagots. She walks around and picks up sticks, und some tears was in her eye vhen a leetle girl comes out of der bushes und speaks oop und says:

"'My good womans, but why dis sorrow?'

"'Because my husband vhas not good to me, und I vhas an old womans. Not one day in my life do I go to a circus or have soda water mit ice cream in it. If I had a piece of clothesline I should hang myself to a tree!'

"'Say not so,' replied dot lettle gal. 'I keep my eyes on you for a long time. You vhas patient und hardworking, und now you shall be rewarded. One, two, three, und presto, change!'

"Und den vhat takes place?" asks der womans of me.

"Vhell, dot person goes home to find dot her husband falls off der dock und vhas drowned. Dere vhas a carriage at der door, und in dot carriage vhas a member of der beef trust. He vhas come to ask her to marry him, und to say dot he vhas worth $10,000,000 und would make her life a perfect paradise on earth.

"She shumps into der carriage und goes avhay und vhas wed. She vhas no longer feefty years old, but thirty. She no longer has gray hairs und wrinkles, but vhas so handsome dot all dry goods stores make her a discount of 10 per cent. In one year she goes to Niagara Falls und ten circuses und feefty theaters. She has ten carriages, a hundred dresses und sixty servants. She goes by der races und bets $1,000."

"Und vhas dot leetle gal in der forest a fairy?" asks der womans.

"She vhas, und vhat she does for one womans she can do for another. You don't have to go out in der forest. Shust sit down at home und be good und dot fairy can find you."

Und when dot womans goes a vhay she vhas smiling und humming to herself und more happy dan for six months. She knows it vhas only a story, but it cheers her oop and brings new hopes.

Dot same day a leetle girl about 10 years old comes in to get her mudder's shoe fixed. Her hands und face vhas dirty und her dress ragged. She vhas mad dot she have to bring der shoes, und she won't talk to me. I wait five minutes und den I begin:

"One time der vhas a leetle girl und her name vhas Nancy. She vhas der daughter of poor parents, und she wears old clothes und neffer goes on a Sunday school picnic or rides on der merry-go-round. Her fadder don't care for her, und her mudder give her ash many ash ten cuffs on der ear every day."

"Dot's der vhay it vhas mit me!" says her leetle girl, ash she shakes her head.

"Dis girl dot I tell you about, she don't like it a bit, but vhat can she do? She cries and cries, but dot vhas no good. If her fadder finds her weeping he swears at her, und if her mudder finds her she gives her 10 cuffs und a slap. She is not old enough to get married, und if she runs avhay der police bring her back."

"Just my case, old mans!" says der girl mit der shoe, "but you can bet your life I'm not going to put up with it much longer!"

"Dere vhas no happiness for der girl in my story, und every night vhen she goes to bed she vishes she vhas dead. One night she vhas going to seat some pounded glass, but a leetle old womans mit a kind face suddenly appeared at her bedside und said:

"Stop, my child. Don't you know dot pounded glass vhill send you to der graveyard?'

"'But der is vhere I like to go!'

"'Foolish little girl. I have known all about you for a year. I vhas a fairy, und your sufferings vhas oafer. Here vhas a box of cold cream und a looking glass. Vhen I vhas gone rub der cream on your chin und look into der glass. If you should ever vhant to see me again telephone to O. K. on Jay street.'"

"Und vhat more happened?" asked der leetle girl mit der shoe.

"Vhell, Nancy rubbed der cream on her chin und looked in der glass, und, behold, she vhas changed into one of der handsomest und sweetest girls of 18 you ever saw. By her bed vhas 20 beautiful dresses, mit hats to match, und der diamond jewelry made her cry out mit pleasure."

"Dat vhas a jolly. But go on."

"Nancy vhas looking at der dresses und diamonds vhen she suddenly flies through der air und bring oop in a palace. Her husband vhas dere. He vhas a beautiful man, wid no bow to his legs. Dere vhas gold und silver, und fried oysters, und ice cream, und angel cake. Dere vhas horses und carriages und servants, und der vhas no baker to come along und say dot if his bill wasn't paid oop he would cut off der bread. It vhas shust happy happiness, und Nancy lived to be one hoondred years old und enjoyed herself every hour."

"Und do you think dot may happen to me?" asks my leetle customer.

"Vhy not? If it can happen to one lettle girl, vhy not to another?"

"Dot vhas so. Do you belief dot old woman fairy will come tonight?"

"I can't say, but you must be on der watch."

"You bet I was on der watch, und shall I tell you vhat will happen if I was changed oafer und get all dose things. I tell fadder and mudder und der old crowd to go to der tuyvel und be hanged to 'em, und if dey ever come on my street I'll whistle for der police und der hurry up wagon!

"Goodby, old mans. Dot story of yours vhas all sour milk, und I don't belief a word of it, but you have a kind heart, und I thank you all der same."

Und she goes avhay whistling und skipping, und I know she half believes dot some good thing is going to happen to her.

Half an hour later a fat womans comes in to get a cement patch on a shoe. My, but she vhas fat! She vhas so big she can hardly get in der door. Vhen she tells me vhat she wants und sits down I begin:

"One time dere vhas a good womans mit a sorrow. She vhas sooch a good womans dot everbody likes her, but dot sorrow vhas ever at hand to bring tears to her eyes."

"Vhas you telling me a fairy story?" she asks.

"Yes."

"Vhell, dot vhas all right. So der womans had a sorrow, eh?"

"She did. It vhas der sorrowest sorrow in der world."

"Vhell, trot it out and let's hear vhat it vhas. Did she have a drunken husband?"

"No."

"A game leg?"

"No."

"Wasn't she loved?"

"In a vhay, yes, but her sorrow vhas her fatness. She vhas der fattest womans on der block. It took her 10 minutes to get into bed, und vhen she fell out again der whole house shook."

"I vhas going on to tell how a fairy came one day and blew dot fatness away und gave dot womans der form of a sylph, but before I could do so she shumps oop und hits me a cuff on der ear und grabs der shoe und sails out und vhen she vhas on der sidewalk she shakes her fist at me und shouts:

"'Oh, you old Dutchman, but if I vhas a man instead of a frail girl I don't let up tell I break every bone in your body.'"

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# An Aesthetic Widow

MRS. ABIGAL LONGBODY was a woman living in the town of Farmdale. She was a widow. She was almost six feet tall, and weighed nearly 200 pounds. She had a hand like a ham and a foot like the track of a hand-sled, and her voice was as gruff as the growl of a bear. When you looked at her you wondered how much cordwood she could cut and pile in a day.

It may astonish you somewhat to learn that the widow was in a way at the head of the 400 in her town. She was boosted there after her husband's death, because she sold some coal lands he had owned and got a lot of money. She at once began to dress well and assert herself. She picked up a bit of grammar, and chewed hundreds of troches to soften her voice, and was in the swim when something happened. The widow Longbody had a female friend over at Clover Hill, who had become aesthetic. She saw beauty in the despised sunflower. She palpitated when she saw catnip growing. She raised her eyes to heaven over burdocks and pigwoods. At the first go-off, the widow laughed about it, but when seriously informed that it was the thing to do she adopted it.

Deacon Tracy, widower, had been courting the widow, and had almost decided to pop the question. She started her new career on him. He had sandy whiskers all around his face, and more than once she had expressed her admiration of them. All of a sudden she changed. He had dropped in and was just clearing his throat to say something that the world has forever lost when she stopped him with:

"Deacon, you look like a fright with those whiskers, and I hope you will have them hoed off before you call again!"

"Hoe off these 'ere whiskers!" he exclaimed in amazement. "By gum, but do you know what you're talking about?"

"They are in shocking bad taste. They look like a lot of marsh hay twisted around a ripe pumpkin!"

"What! What!"

"I'm seeing things different from what I used to," explained the widow.

"Wall, I should say you was! These whiskers are 25 years old, and are goin' to stay right where they are!"

"Then for mercy's sake get them dyed! The color grates on me!"

"I'd like to see myself feedin' dye to them whiskers! Anything else on your mind?"

"You drag your legs when you walk!"

"I do, eh! I remind you of an old knee-sprung hoss, do I? Wall, I kin drag them legs right outer your house and take my whiskers with 'em."

"And deacon, learn not to talk through your nose. It jars on one's finer sensibilities."

"I talk through my nose, do I? Wall, the nose goes outer the house along with the legs and whiskers, and none of 'em will ever bother you any more!"

Mr. Johnson, who bought butter and eggs and shipped them away to the city, had also had an eye on the Widow Longbody. She always entertained him very pleasantly when he called, and he had begun to feel the rose of love blooming in his heart. On what proved to be his last call the widow queried of him:

"Mr. Johnson, why don't you wear a wig?"

"A—a wig?" he stammered.

"Yes, a wig. The sight of your bald and shiny poll reminds me of a waxed floor. I should think that you'd have gumption enough to cover it up."

"You are talking in a strange way, widder."

"Nothing strange about it. You need at least four false teeth. Why don't you get 'em?"

"I—I——"

"And you've got chin whiskers that make you look like an old goat! Get someone to plane 'em off!"

"Widder, this is too much—too much!"

"And you spit tobacco juice on your shirt bosom!"

"By heck, but I won't stand for no such talk! I'll leave your house!"

"And you always sit with your legs poked out like a pair of posts! A man with such shanks as yours ought to hide 'em!"

"I have been insulted, woman!"

"And have your eyebrows thinned out!" was the widow's parting shot.

The aesthetic crusade was fairly launched, and there was humiliation ahead for many a man and woman. Even the pastor of the widow's church did not escape. He was told that his trowsers bagged at the knees, and that the dandruff on his coat collar could be seen by the whole congregation.

In front of the Widow Longbody's home ran a stream they were pleased to call Plug River. It had been Plug River for 40 years, but now it must be changed to Rosamond brook. The esthetic widow would have it so, and wouldn't speak to any of the plugs who stuck out for Plug River. A bridge across it had long been needed and talked of, and the county finally voted it. It was to be a covered bridge.

The Widow Longbody didn't object to the architecture, but when the carpenter work was completed and the painters came on there was a row. Every bridge in the country districts has always been painted red, if painted at all. It was red for this bridge. The widow was away for three days, and when she returned the bridge was half painted.

"Stop! Stop! It cannot be! It shall not be!" cried the aesthetic.

"What's the kick?" asked the man who had the work in charge.

"It screams! It howls! It shrieks! It murders harmony and kills the landscape! I could not live here a day with that red barn of a thing staring me in the face. Ugh!"

She was told that she would have to endure it or more. Aetheticism was all right when applied to sunflowers and bull thistles, but when it came down to red bridges that was a matter of business.

"Oh, it is, eh?" was answered. "Well, there's another thing that is a matter of business."

Along the western side of the town the widow owned a strip of land which had a hill on it—a hill and a spring. With her free consent the water was piped down from the spring to supply many families and used to sprinkle the streets. When they refused to change the color of the bridge the water refused to flow down hill. The people howled, but they were helpless. After a week it was agreed that the esthetic might name the color. She decided on a pearl-gray. After a third of the bridge had been covered she changed it to vivid green. Then she wanted white with green trimmings.

"No more fooling!" was the decision of the taxpayers when they realized that the widow Longbody might finally demand that the bridge be covered with goldleaf.

"Very well," replied the woman, as she prepared her second surprise.

Her husband had opened a street for his own convenience and had never deeded it to the town. People had bought sites and erected houses. They suddenly found themselves fenced in. When they went to the lawyers the legal talent hunted the matter up and replied:

"If you touch the fence she can have you arrested for trespass."

The town hated to be beaten by a woman and was talking about a big lawsuit when along came a lightning rod man. He was a jimdandy of a man. He was a wooer from Wooerville. He talked and he wooed and he won. In a fortnight he had won the widow's heart and hand. When this fact was rumored the bridge committee called on her to ask:

"Well, what about the bridge."

"Paint it any old color you want to!"

"And the fence across Kirby street?"

"Tell 'em to tear it down!"

"And you—you are no longer esthetic"

"Not by a darned sight! Jim and I have already settled on corned beef and cabbage for our bridal dinner. Sorry I've had trouble with the town, but you see I was living on water crackers all the time and trying to be the next thing to an angel."

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# Mrs. Dolby's Talks

AS DEACON DOLBY worked with saw and hammer at the barn he heard Mrs. Dolby in the house singing Rock of Ages.

He smiled and he sighed.

After singing the hymn seven times over Mrs. Dolby dropped it for I Shall Watch for Thee.

"She getting ready!" whispered the deacon.

After "watching" for a quarter of an hour, Mrs. Dolby took up the strains of I've Got a Home Over There.

"It'll be her night for it!" whispered the deacon, as he shook his head.

And by and by there came floating on the air the words of the good old hymn, With the Angels Up Above.

"——it!" announced the good man at the barn, as he threw down some hay to his hungry cow.

After supper that evening Deacon Dolby casually observed that he must go down to the store and get a pound of tenpenny nails to fix the hogpen with on the morrow, and he left Mrs. Dolby singing as she cleared the dishes off the table. He was gone an hour, and when he returned he was astonished to find the house in darkness. He entered and lighted a lamp, and as he passed through into the sitting-room he beheld the woman lying on her back on the floor with her eyes closed and her hands folded on her breast. He gave her one brief glance and then sat down at the center table to read. At the post-office he had received a circular relating to geese and their care, and it started off in an interesting way.

Deacon Dolby had been reading for five minutes and had got as far as to be told that a goose was capable of affection, when there was a stir on the floor and Mrs. Dolby sat up. She coughed three coughs to hint to Mr. Dolby that she was not dead, but the circular held all his interest. Two minutes passed, and then Mrs. Dolby rose up and took a seat on the lounge and said:

"Samuel, I didn't want to frighten you, but I couldn't help fainting away."

The Deacon read from the circular that a goose had been known to go into a rage at the mere sight of a red-headed woman, and just then Mrs. Dolby said:

"You had just gone out when Mrs. Lamphere came in. She hadn't been over for a week, and she wanted to borrow a darning needle and ask me if I was going to put up any pickled peaches this season. We had talked for about five minutes when all at once she broke down and sobbed like a child. Samuel, do you want to know what she sobbed about?"

He didn't. He wanted to stick right to that circular until he had devoured every line of it. He was finding out that he had lived for 45 years without knowing the goose as she was.

"I at first thought that mebbe her sister in North Dakota was dead, but when she got over her sobbing so's she could speak she said it was because she felt such pity for me. Then—then Samuel, I broke down and sobbed with her, and—and"—

And she sobbed and snuffled and sobbed again, and the Deacon sat there and read that if a farmer could have patience with a goose he could teach her to jump through a hoop, the same as a circus performer.

"But I'm not going to cry any more, Samuel. The time of crying has passed. I am going to tell you what Mrs. Lamphere said, and then end this life of turmoil and trouble. I have known Mrs. Lamphere ever since she was a little girl, and I have never known her to tell a lie, and she is not a tattler, either. What she told me was from a sense of duty. She said it made her heart ache to know that I was living with a pirate and never suspecting it."

The Deacon prepared himself for the worst, but gave no outward sign, and presently Mrs. Dolby ceased sniffling and continued:

"One morning six weeks ago the cow kicked while you were milking her. You went over backward off the stool with a yell, and when you got up you pounded her with the milkstool and swore. Don't deny it, Samuel. Mrs. Gearing heard it, and she told Mrs. Lamphere. Mrs. Carter also heard it, and she almost fainted. Mrs. Gearing knows what swearing is, and she never heard the like. It made her blood run cold. She didn't get over shivering for hours. You whacked and pounded and swore and jumped up and down, and the poor woman flew into the house for her life. I noticed how pale you looked when you came in, and when I asked you what was the matter you said you felt bilious. Deacon Samuel Dolby, you pounded the cow, used profane language and lied to me! What have you got to say to it?"

Not a word. That circular said that if a goose was always addressed in a kind and courteous manner she would reciprocate by extra work in laying eggs and catching caterpillars and grasshoppers, and the information was highly interesting. It beat pounding a kicking cow all hollow.

"Just three or four days later, Samuel, you went over to see Farmer Jones about buying a hog. He had half a barrel of old cider in the house, and when he invited you to take a drink you pitched right in. You knew what old cider was, and yet you drank half a gallon of it. Mr. Jones did the same, and then you both began to jump around and have fun. You boxed each other's hats off; you wrestled; you jumped. And then both of you began to brag, and it wasn't long before you were calling each other liars. If Mrs. Jones hadn't rushed between you, there would have been a fight. Think of it, Samuel—you, a Deacon, calling folks liars and saying that you would lick them out of their boots with one hand tied behind you! Mr. Lamphere was going past and heard it all. Don't lie to me and say that you didn't do this."

The Deacon didn't lie. He didn't come within 40 rods of it. He simply turned to page two of the circular and continued the history of the goose.

"And one more thing, Samuel," continued Mrs. Dolby, through her tears. "Only two weeks ago you were downtown one day and got into a talk with old Mr. Carpenter about Japan. He said that if we had a war with Japan he feared the worst, because they were such fighters and would soon have the larger navy. You replied that we could lick the stuffing out of Japan in five minutes, and that anybody who denied it was a liar. Then, when that poor old man still insisted, you offered to slap his chops and called him a traitor. Think of it! It was a wonder you didn't bring on an earthquake or something. I believe I did feel the ground trembling that day, but I thought it was a saw-log rolling down hill somewhere. Are you going to deny what you did, Samuel?"

Samuel wasn't. He would neither deny nor affirm. He was following that goose and learning that she could be made to act as the playmate of a young child if properly trained while yet a gosling.

"Well, this ends it, Samuel! I fainted away when I heard the news, but I'm going to do something besides faint this time. You see, I have a rope here. I'm going out to the henhouse and hang myself. I couldn't live with you another single day and keep my self-respect. I can simply say goodby to you and hope that if we ever meet in that better land you will have got over being a pirate. I'm going, Samuel. Don't disturb yourself tonight, but come out in the morning to cut my body down and tell the neighbors."

Mrs. Dolby picked her way into the kitchen and lighted a candle, and the next moment the Deacon heard the outer door close. He did not get out of his chair. He did not call out. He simply read that the bite of an old gander was equal to that of a year-old dog and that instances had been know where it resulted fatally. Five minutes went by, then 10, 15. Then the door opened, and Mrs. Dolby and her rope and candle appeared. She was smiling. She put the candle and rope down and came up close to him and whispered:

"Samuel, do you know why I didn't commit suicide?"

He didn't know, but he didn't say so.

"Because, when I got out to the henhouse I found that old setting hen had hatched out 10 little chicks, and I didn't want to be so mean as to disturb them—yes, 10 little chicks, and they have come four days ahead of time!"

Then the Deacon laid down the circular, yawned, stretched, looked at the clock and said:

"It's half past 9, and I'm going to bed!"

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