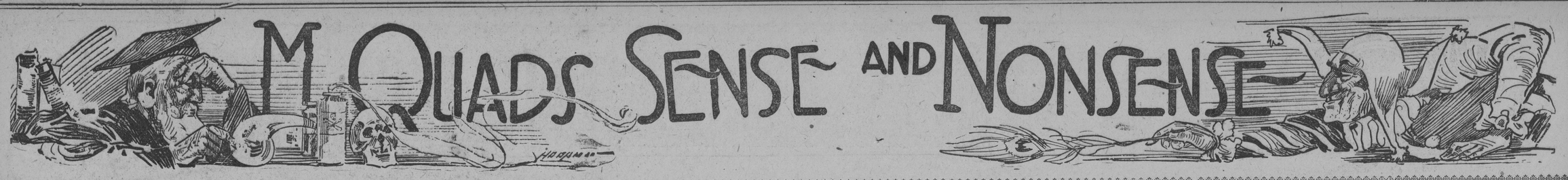

Mrs. Bowser Tells It---The Evening Began Wrong, But Turned Out Happily

I KNEW that I was in for it.

If Mr. Bowser came home feeling good natured there might be only a few "humphs" of disgust, but if things at the office had gone wrong then he would break loose.

I had three hours in which to make up my mind, and when he arrived I had decided what to do.

You see, the other afternoon a messenger boy brought our cook a telegram to the effect that her sister, living 10 miles away, was very ill and wanted to see her at once. She was ready to leave in half an hour, and I took hold of the work and had a good dinner awaiting Mr. Bowser when he reached home. He entered the house in a pleasant mood, but no sooner had I broken the news to him about the cook than he said:

"I thought it was about time for another kickup! By John, but can't you keep a girl for 15 minutes without a row?"

"We haven't changed girls in five months," I replied, "and there would have been no change now but for sickness. Annie will probably be back in a day or two. Meanwhile I can do the cooking."

"Meanwhile I have got to live on crusts and bones and feel that things are upside down!" he growled. "If there's a worse run house in America I'd like to know where it's located. The cook has no sick sister. She simply made that an excuse to get away from here. All your cooks do that when they can't stand your ways."

"What is wrong with my ways, Mr. Bowser?"

"Everything. You crush a girl to the earth. You grind her to a pulp. You are around with your nose cocked up and demand that she get down on her knees to you. I have always pitied them from the bottom of my heart, poor things!"

"That's probably the reason why two of them said you made googoo eyes and tried to flirt, and two others called you an old hen and wouldn't stay, even when I offered to increase their wages."

"Woman, do you know what you are saying?"

"I do."

"Then, by the great horn spoon, but I feel like boxing your ears! I make googoo eyes at your cook! I try to flirt with her! I—I——"

"Be calm, Mr. Bowser. There is no need of any quarrel over this thing. I have made up my mind that you would come home to talk just as you have done, and I determined on my course. I have my trunk nearly packed."

"And you'll go home to your mother?"

"I will."

"And there'll be a separation and a divorce?"

"Certainly."

"And—and——"

"And that's all. After three or four years you can marry someone who'll run your house to suit your ideas."

"I was going to propose this very step, Mrs. Bowser, and it is the most sensible thing you have said in six months. Yes, divorce is inevitable, but, of course, I shall see that you are well provided for as to alimony."

Neither of us ate any of the dinner I had been to such pains to cook. I left the table set and went up to my room and began to bang my trunk around, and after a few minutes I slipped softly downstairs to find that Mr. Bowser had taken off his coat, rolled up his sleeves and was clearing off the table and washing up the dishes.

"So it's separation and divorce!" he mused as he worked. "All right. It was bound to come sooner or later and why not now? When a wife will take a crowbar and pound on the piano to make her hard-working husband $25 extra expense it's time there was a divorce. I've talked and talked but it has done no good. She's got some good points about her, but it will have to be—have to be."

He grumbled away below his breath while he was taking down the roller towel to use as a dish towel, and then I heard him say:

"Wonder what the mother-in-law will say about it? I know, however. She'll give me an awful roast. Shouldn't wonder if she'd come right down here and do her song and dance act and make it bad for me. She's got a way about her to make a fellow's hair stand up. Mebbe I was a little hasty—mebbe so. If Mrs. Bowser hadn't walked off and left me to wash these dishes——"

I had to go up to the sitting-room to avoid discovery, and 20 minutes later he found me there.

Neither of us spoke.

Both sat down and stared into vacancy.

A woman can beat a man at a waiting game, and after a quarter of an hour I tired Mr. Bowser out. He began to shuffle his feet and twiddle his thumbs and at length got up and went into the library. I listened at the keyhole and as he walked to and fro I heard him say:

"She sits there like a bump on a log and says nothing. If she expects me to speak first she'll get sadly left."

He was silent for a minute, during which he kicked the dictionary across the floor and banged a chair about, and then he resumed.

"Mrs. Bowser has got her trunk packed and will want to go in the morning, and I don't know what in thunder I'm going to do. I can't get a housekeeper in here, and I'll be hanged if I go to a hotel or boarding-house. What did she want to fire up the way she did for? She knows my little ways and has always put up with them till this time, but the minute I began to talk she said she'd been packing her trunk to go home. Never was so astonished in my life, but, of course, I had to tell her to trot along. By gun! By gun!"

I heard him approaching the door and I got back into the sitting-room. He came in after a moment, trying hard to look careless, and after pacing up and down he took a chair and remarked that it was snowing outdoors.

I replied that it was possible.

He said that we'd had very little snow thus far this winter.

I replied that I hadn't been interested.

He then took the cat on his lap and asked if I thought her eyesight was failing.

He then skipped from cat to mother-in-law and hoped she was well.

She is well, thank you.

Then Mr. Bowser began to shuffle and twiddle again, and in another minute he rose up and returned to the library. I took up my former position just in time to hear him say:

"The old girl's got her back up for fair this time. She ought to see that I'm doing my best to make up with her, but she won't have it. Wonder if she expects me to get down on my knees to her. I won't do it if I die for it, but it puts me in a hole just the same. What in the old Harry is going to become of me if she goes?"

Then he got mad and kicked that poor dictionary back again, and back and forth the other way, and it was two minutes before he went on:

"Bowser, you are an old crank! Durn your cats, but why do you jump on anybody with both feet the way you do? You come home and find that the cook has been called away by sickness—legitimate sickness—and you immediately begin to blow and bluster and walk around on Mrs. Bowser. Yes, you are an old crank, and you've got yourself into a nice fix at last! What you want to do is to go right down there and chuck that woman under the chin and beg her pardon and——. No, you can't do that You want to put on your hat and overcoat and go out and slam the door behind you. She'll probably get scared and come down off her high horse and call you back, and then you can make up without loss of dignity."

I got out of the way, and Mr. Bowser put his plan in operation. It didn't work. He stood on the steps for five minutes, waiting for a call, and when none came he re-entered the house with crestfallen demeanor. Hanging up his hat on the hall tree, he came back into the sitting-room and stood and looked at me.

I returned his gaze.

"While I'm an angel."

"Yes, you are that, and I want to say——"

"So do I. I'm not going home to mother in the morning."

Then—— Well, then, Mr. Bowser and I had a happy evening together, and in his exuberance of spirits he lifted the cat to his shoulder and went dancing around the room like a boy 10 years old. I think he'll be good for at least a week to come.

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Too Imaginative.

Magistrate—And what was the prisoner doing?

Constable—'E were 'aving a very 'eated argument with a cab driver, yer worship.

Magistrate—But that doesn't prove he was drunk.

Constable—Ah! But there weren't no cab driver there, yer worship.—London Opinion.

Density.

"Do you believe love makes the world go round, professor?"

"Ahem! Of course not. The earth first acquired its rotary motion when thrown off from the sun in a nebulous form, its centrifugal force being counteracted to a certain extent by the superior atraction of the solar body from which it originally emanated."—Birmingham Age-Herald.

Uncle Eli's Fables

ONCE upon a time a hungry Fox who was prowling through the forest in search of food espied an Owl asleep upon the limb of a low tree. After deciding he could not reach the Bird by a spring, Reynard called out:

"Say, Mr. Owl, I would like to have a word with you today."

"Well?" replied the Bird, as he lazily opened his eyes.

"They call you the Bird of Wisdom, don't they?"

"I believe they have applied that term to me."

"But they were mistaken. I deny that you are wiser than any other bird."

"Yes?"

"And not nearly as handsome as most of them."

"I see."

"As a matter of fact, you are a stupid old son of a gun."

"Very likely."

"And so tough and tasteless that if you were down here at the end of my nose I wouldn't think of eating you."

"No?"

"Wise? Why, you don't know enough to last you over night! Say now, I defy you to tell me one wise thing you ever did."

"I think my getting 12 feet from the ground to go to sleep wasn't so very bad?" chuckled the Owl, as he ruffled his feathers and slept again.

MORAL.

"The old snopzer has got a level head, after all," said the Fox to himself as he galloped away to find other game. "I might not have eaten him, but he was wise not to take the chances."

The Peasant and the Frog.

One time, when a very dry season prevailed, a Peasant found a Frog by the roadside, and took pity on him and carried him home and deposited him in a pond near his house. That night, as the man went to bed, the Frog began to croak, and kept it up so vigorously and long that the Peasant finally arose and went out and began throwing rocks.

"Here—how is this?" demanded the Frog.

"Your croaking keeps me awake."

"But I was only showing my gratitude."

"Then show it by keeping quiet."

The Frog had no more croaks to croak, but in the course of half an hour the Peasant came out again to throw more rocks.

"What is it now?" asked the Frog, as he bobbed up.

"It is the incongruity of the situation. What is a Frog in a frog pond but to croak? The night has become so quiet that I cannot sleep."

"Since you throw stones if I croak, and throw others if I do not, what am I to do about it?" asked the Frog.

"Well, come to think it over, your question strikes me as an impudent one, and here's at you for that!"

MORAL.

Don't be too ready to pick up other people's troubles.

Silence sometimes shows more gratitude than gab.

Own your own frog pond.

The Bear and the Owl.

Once upon a time a young Bear, who had had a good breakfast and felt that there was a happy life before him, was prowling through the woods, when he espied an Owl seated on the limb of a tree, and halted to look up and say:

"Good morning, old chunk of wisdom. How's the owl business coming on these days?"

The Owl realized the lack of respect shown to a bird of her silence and wisdom, but pleasantly answered:

"Oh, so-so for this kind of weather. I noticed that you are doing the bear-act in great shape."

"Well, I'm not the only pebble on the beach, but I rather think I'm well up to the front. No one has seen flies on me of late. Say, Daddy, can't you put me on to a good thing?"

"Um. Yes, I might."

"Then let's have it, and I'll give you a free ticket to the circus next time I have two."

"You know where muskrat swamp is, of course?" queried the Owl as he turned his head away to grin.

"Just as well as I know where my left hind leg is."

"On this side of the swamp there is a big oak tree."

"I've seen it. Say, now, when I was a little feller my mother said that tree was inhabited by whippoorwills, and that they made cider vinegar."

"Correct, my son. Go thou and climb the tree and partake of the vinegar and listen to the songs of the whippoorwills. It is the goodest good thing I know of in these woods."

"Thanks, old chappie. Ta, ta."

Half an hour later the Owl followed on to find the Bear rolling over and over on the ground and uttering his laments in a loud voice. Upon asking what had happened the victim wailed on:

"Alas, but I have been deceived! It was a bee tree, and I have received more than a thousand stings. You said it was a good thing.

MORAL.

"So I did, my son—so I did. Firstly, you must learn that all good things have to be paid for. Secondly, one should know the difference between honey bees and whippoorwills to appreciate their songs. Thirdly, if there was not a difference between honey and vinegar there would be no difference between a wise man and a fool. What you've got is experience, and experience is a good thing."

The Wolves and the Lion.

Once upon a time the Wolves decided that the Lion was carrying things with too high a hand, so they met in convention to see what should be done about it.

"He has insulted us as a body on many occasions," said one speaker.

"He has even gone out of his way to do it," added a second.

"He doesn't seem to consider that we have a dignity to maintain."

"He constantly rubs our fur the wrong way and takes a malicious pleasure in so doing."

"He thinks he is the IT and that we count for nothing.

"Something must be done to check his high-handed ways. I move that a committee be appointed to draw up a resolution."

"Second the motion," added an old Wolf, who had been caught stealing sheep only a few days before, "and I move that the aforesaid resolution be red-hot."

The motion was carried unanimously, and the committee was selected and retired and brought the following resolution before the meeting:

'Whereas, the lion was elected King over all, and he thinks he is King, and that what he says goes, now therefore,

"Resolved that a Wolf is as big as a Lion and twice as dangerous."

The resolution was adopted by a large majority, and the Wolves dispersed with a feeling that they had at last vindicated their sacred honor before the world.

MORAL:

When the Lion is where you can't hit him with a club try a resolve.

The Peasant and the Traveler.

The peasant was working in his field near the roadside one day when a traveler came along and halted to say:

"I have met with a case of base ingratitude."

"Oh, that's not so strange in this world," was the reply. "What is your complaint?"

"Why, a mile or so back I saw the cows had broken into the peasant's field of corn, and I took the trouble to walk a long ways to notify him. My reward was only a crust of bread. I am now here to notify you that there is a fire in the grass back there which will burn your fences if not extinguished shortly."

"And are you curious to see how I will show my gratitude, eh?"

"Well, rather that way."

"My friend, a crust of bread is dry eating by itself. Back of the house is a bee-hive. Go to it and get honey to spread on your bread."

"Thanks, that's something like it."

The traveler took his way to the hive in eager anticipation, but in a minute returned to exclaim:

"Thou art another base ingrate. The hive is empty of both bees and honey!"

"My friend," replied the peasant, "you notified a man that his cows were in the corn. It was not his corn, and they were getting a feed for nothing. You notified me of a fence in danger. If the fire destroys it may as well have a clear way into another man's oat field. You have injured us in seeking to arouse our gratitude."

MORAL:

He that mindeth his own affairs earns the gratitude of all.

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In Auto Society.

Miss Goggles—Mrs. Mode claims she has a model husband.

Miss Tires—Humph! A last year's model!—Puck.

Offended.

Art Student—So you adore art! Do you paint?

Sweet young thing—Sir!—Wisconsin Sphinx.

The Lime Kiln Club

WHEN the routine business of the Limekiln Club had been transacted at its last regular Saturday night meeting, Brother Gardner arose and said:

"It has come to my ears dat a number of de members of dis club am longin' to be great, and dat dey reckon if dey can achieve greatness dat dey will go glidin' frew life like a streak of 'lasses creepin' across de flooh. I don't care how hard any of you work to become great or how quick you git dar, but don't make any mistake about greatness. Dar am sartin things dat you can't shake off, no matter whether you am as big as a haystack or small nuff to crawl into a bar'l.

"Julius Caesar was a great man. He walked around all puffed out and his coat tails wavin', and de man who didn't gib him all de road was hung within 16 minits. A good shere ob de world took off dere hats to him, and it nebber cost him a red cent to go into a circus or to carry home de biggest watermillyun in de bunch. Lordy, but it would make your ha'r curl to know jist how great dat Julius was and de swath he cut!

"What happened to Mr. Caesar arter he had become great? Did he go slidin' down hill widout any stumps in de way? Did he escape all de botheration dat comes to common folks? Don't you bet dat he did! He had chilblains. He had biles. He had colic. He went to bed wid headaches and got up wid backaches. Fellers borrowed money of him and didn't pay it back. De buttons ripped off his clothes, and his cat got chased by dawgs. He heard death-ticks in de wall; he had de nightmare; somebody stole his hens, and when dat great man came to die he was glad of it.

"Alexander de Great was a great man. I was readin' about him de other night and felt chills creep up my back. If he smiled at a man dat man was worth a millyun dollars widin a week; if he scowled at any one, dat man was dead widin an hour. If he sneezed millyuns of people hid in de woods; if he roared, all de babies for ten miles around dropped dead. You can judge how great a man he was when I say dat de tailor who cleaned his clothes dasn't send in a bill for fifteen years.

"And did Alexander escape de trubles dat come to you and me and other common folks? Let history answer. Read it, and we find dat his mother-in-law come to lib wid him and run de house; dat he fell off de shed roof and broke a rib; dat ebery chimney in de house smoked; dat water got into his cellar and floated de 'taters about; dat his hired gal packed her duds and quit at an hour's notice; dat his cow had de hollerhorn and somebody pizened his dog. Alexander was great, but he had to pay for it, and when he finally got de measles and caught cold and was brung to his dyin' bed he seemed powerful glad to go.

"Take somebody nigher home. Take George Washington, for instance. Ebery picture you see of him looks as complacent and smilin' as if he had won a prize in a lottery. You read of him in history swellin' around and doin' mighty little for his wages, and it has got so dat more'n a millyon boys in dis kentry am sighin' to be Washingtons.

"Turn de picture ober and gaze on de other side. Do you imagine dat de frost didn't kill his cowcumbers vines? Dat de hawgs didn't bust deir way into his garden? Dat de ager didn't shake his bones didn't kill his cowcumber vines? Dat de crows didn't scratch up his co'n and de cull'd populashun walk off wid his watermillyons? He found buttons off his shirt; he found lumps in his bed; he found de hired gal usin' his toothbrush; he found dat somebody had stolen de hoe and broken de ax; he got kicked by de cow when he milked and got it by de old hoss when he cleaned him off. Don't let nobody fool you about George Washington. Of co'se he was a big man and saved de kentry, but he had to pay for it just de same.

"Most of you have a volume or two of Shakespeare, bought on de installment plan, in de house. When you get sot down in de rockin' chair, pipe in mouth, and de wind's howlin' around outside, dat poetry reads so sleek and slick dat you can't imagine any trubles comin' to de man who made it. It's jest like holdin' a jug of 'lasses up to your mouth as you sit on a log in de sunshine and lettin' de sweet stuff slide down your throat. You can't possibly think of Shakespeare and back rent in de same minnit.

"And yet, my frens, how did the great man lib? De constable was arter him from Monday mawnin' to Saturday night. He was in debt wheber dey would trust him. He neber met a man unless he struck him for a quarter. If dere was a cold snap he was out of wood. If dere was a hot wave, he had no white pants to wear, bekase the washwoman wouldn't come to de house until she was paid what was comin' to her. He nebber had a dawg dat would stay wid him for a week. He never driv out into de kentry to commune wid nature dat a bumble-bee didn't sting him or a bull toss him ober de pastur' fence. If he got $10 ahead of de game and was gwine to have chicken potpie for Sunday dinner, a whole wagon load of his relashuns would drive up and eat him out of house and home and go away made bekase he hadn't a lot of Rock Ford cantaloupes to finish off wid.

"Doorin' de last years of his life he owned and run seben theaters, but dere was so many deadheads dat he couldn't make a cent.

"Only a week befo' his death, and while he had two doctors feelin' of his pulse and lookin' wise, somebody broke into his smokehouse and stole three sides of bacon.

"Let us come down to my own case. You see me walkin' along de street wid my plug hat on and my snuff-brown suit and gold-headed cane. My stomach is puffed out. I am lookin' straight ahead of me wid de utmost dignity. I look to eberbody like a great man on his way down to de bank to get a check cashed. Teams stop to let me cross de street, and de small boy shrinks away abashed. You stand dere and hold your breath and wish you was Brudder Gardner.

"And yet, my frens, gaze on de other side of the pictur'. I's got a sore throat. I's got two more co'ns. De cold got into my cellar and frosbit my taters. My brudder down in Virginny wants to borry $10 of me. My cat has jest died and my dawg run away. I has got two lawsuits on hand, and my old meyl is standin' in the shed so sick dat I expect to find him a corpse when I get hom. You see greatness befo' you, but you don't see de trubles dat I have to pass frew.

"It am all right to sigh for greatness, but greatness has got to pay de butcher and grocer same as other folks. Greatness in itself am all right, but don't imagine it's all gwine to de circus and pickin' up diamonds.

"Wid all a great man's greatness—wid de cheers of de multitude ringin' in his ears—wid hatless men and smilin' women follerin' him about, he may go home to find his old woman standin' in de hall wid a club in her hand and waitin' to say to him dat der flour bar'l am empty, de bacon gone and de chillen wantin' new shoes, and dat if he don't get a hustle on him she'll mighty soon know de reason why.

"My advice to you am to be great up to a sartin' p'int—up to dat p'int whar your credit am good for a pound of coffee all to once, and den stop. Anything beyond dat may bring you down wid a crash and leave you a wreck."

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He Wanted Gore

I HAD heard from the old man's neighbors how his reputation as a rough and tumble fighter was once saved by his wife, and though I had thrown out hints several times neither of them seemed inclined to tell the tale. I, therefore, had to wait 'till the signs came right. One autumn day Zeb took me along with him as he visited his traps for mink along a creek, and as we rested on a rock pervious to the long walk back to his cabin he said:

"That ain't much of a yarn."

"But I want to hear it."

"The old woman don't like it talked about."

"But she shan't know from me."

"Well, I'll begin by sayin' that I'd worked so hard fur three or fo' y'ars arter the wah that I got all run down and couldn't skassly git about. Thar was days when I felt purty well and days when I jest sot around and hadn't strength 'nuff to move outdoahs. That same yar a critter named Pike moved into the nayburhood. He was from Alabamy, I believe, and he let it be known powerful soon that he was a hefty man in a scrimmage. He talked so loud and blowed so high that everybody was skeart of him, and he jest went around steppin' high and bossin' the roost. That critter used to cum down to my cabin and brag and blow and tell how many men he'd licked, and one day I gin him plain to understan' that I didn't believe his stories. That made him mad, and he went away sayin' as how he'd wallop me fur his next victim. He knowed I was in poor health and couldn't fight a fly, but every two or three days he'd cum down and stand in front of the cabin and yell:

"'Now, then, Zeb White, cum out yere and git the awfullest wallopin' a human critter ever received. I'm no hand to brag, but I kin tie both hands behind me and then chaw yo' up in two minits! I've licked 47 different men and never got my nose skinned. Either own up that yo' dasn't fight a man or cum out and be walloped!'

"That's the way he'd talk to me," continued Zeb, "and I'd get so mad that I cried like a child. Bimeby I begun to git a little better, and one day when he was callin 'on me to cum fo'th and be walloped I told him that if he'd show up a week from that day I'd tackle him. He went away crackin' his heels and whoopin' and rejoicin', and the old woman and sez to me, sez she:

"Zeb White, if you was a well man yo' could wallop that critter befo' I could make a hoecake, but yo've been down the banks all summer, and yo' can't git well in a week. I'm sorry yo' passed yo'r word, but bein' it's passed we'll hev to abide by it. I'll git whisky and roots tomorrer and brace yo' up."

"And did you get better?"

"No; I got wuss. Whisky and roots didn't do me no good. When the time was up, I was in bed and too weak to walk across the room. That pesky critter knowed just how it was with me and yit he cum and stood in front of my cabin and shouted to the ole woman:

"Ar' this the dwellin' place of a varmint named Zeb White?"

"She be."

"Calls hisself the possum hunter of Tennessee, don't he?"

"Yes; he do."

"Has wrasseled with b'ars and wildcats and panters, and thinks hisself powerful on the fight?"

"That's my Zeb."

"Then I hain't made no mistake. Would yo' do me the everlastin' kindness to tell him to step out yere while I chaw his ears off and stay my hunger?"

"He's sick abed just now, but if you'll cum back arter dark he'll make yo' eat grass and beller like a calf!"

"Then yo' kin be lookin' for me. Widder White, I'll be kinder sorry to see death take him fr'm yo', but I must hev him for my forty-eighth victim. Good arternoon, Widder White; good arternoon."

"That's how they talked," said Zeb as he heaved a rock at a snake sunning itself on a rock, "and of co'se I heard every word of it. I jest couldn't help weepin' with my madness. How was I to go out and fight when I couldn't git out of bed? That's what I asked the ole woman, and she sorter winked and smiled and sez to me, sez she:

"Zeb, doan' you' worry no mo' 'bout this wallopin' bizness, but leave it all to me. If that varmint shows up here tonight, he'll be the wust licked man in all Tennessee befo' he gits away!"

"But who's gwine to lick him?"

"Never yo' mind."

"She wouldn't soy no mo'," continued Zeb, "and I was too feeble to figure it out. I cried myself to sleep, and it was after dark when I woke up. That thar varmint had cum back, 'cordin' to promise, and was in front of the cabin a-shoutin':

"Zeb White, the time has cum fur yo' to be pulverized! Mebbe I won't do no mo' than chaw yo'r ears off and cripple yo' fur life, but I'll do that much fur shore. Cum outer yo'r hole and stand up to me like a man!"

"Jest about the time he begun to beller my ols woman begun to git, outen her clothes and inter mine.

"What yo' gwine to do?" sez I.

"Gwine out to wallop that critter or die!" sez she.

"But yo' ar' a woman and he air a powerful fighter!"

"Zeb White, yo' snuggle down and keep quiet. He's cum fur a fight. He's bin promised one and has to hev it. As yo' can't fight him, I shall, and I'm a-feelin' that the Lord will put a jawbone inter my hand to slather him!"

"It wasn't no use to talk to her. When she got all dressed up, she looked like a man, and as she stood in the door that varmint cracked his heels together and crowed like a rooster. I jest had the strength to git to the winder, and I saw all that took place. When the feller had crowed and cracked, he yelled out:

"My forty-eighth victim ar' now befo' me to be chawed! Speak up, Zeb White, and tell me which ear yo'd rather I'd begin on to git up my appetite. Whoop, whoop-ee!"

"And about the fight?" I asked as Zeb was silent for several minutes.

"For what reason?"

"It was full of surprises," he answered. "That varmint was only a blowhard arter all. The ole woman walked around him two or three times and then sailed in. He hollered at the first jump and tried to git away, but she wouldn't let him. She scratched, kicked and pulled hair, and when she finally let up on him he wouldn't hev looked wuss if half a dozen b'ars had played with him. I've seen a heap of men walloped but he was the wallopedest man of the hull lot."

"And he didn't know it was a woman?" I asked.

"Never till he got home and his wife examined the claw marks and the bites. The story got around, and purty soon he had to jest pull up and move away. He had been licked by a woman, and if was the wuss lickin' he ever got."

"And how did Mrs. White come out of it?"

"She didn't git a scratch, but I've allus bin sorry about it."

"Waal," said Zeb, as he turned his face away from me, "befo' that fight she was a mighty humble woman and left all the bossin' to me. Sence then she's—she's—

"She's not so humble?"

"Jest so; jest got the idea that she kin wallop me same as she did him, and that ar' days when she's all ready to make a try at it. Spiles a woman to git some noshuns in her head—of co'se it does."

And an hour after we got home that evening I overheard her saying to him:

"Now, Zeb White, yo' git me up a heap of firewood by the back doah tomorrer or take the consequenses will make yo'r back ache fur a hull month to cum!"

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Mrs. Dolby's Talks

AFTER supper Deacon Dolby said he guessed he'd better clear the snow off his sidewalk, and as Mrs. Dolby brought forward no valid objections he went out and put in an hour's hard work. He came in with backache and kicked off his shoes to dump himself down on the lounge.

Mrs. Dolby was clearing off the table and singing hymns, and though the singing would have loosened a cow's horns it finally lulled the deacon to sleep. He was snoozing and dreaming when Mrs. Dolby appeared with hands pressed to her heart and a wobble to her gait, and, sinking into a chair, she gasped:

"Samuel Dolby, I shall be as dead as a crowbar in less'n an hour, and you'd better git up and give me a last embrace."

Mr. Dolby gurgled in his throat as he slept, and without seeming to notice his condition she continued.

"Yes, Samuel, I've got my summons. I was puttin' away the last dish when my heart give a sudden bob, my head begun to go round, and right before me I saw my coffin and an open grave. For a minit I thought I was a goner, but then a small voice whispered to me that I'd live an hour longer, and that I'd better come in and talk to you. I'm here to say some last dyin' words to you, Samuel, and, though I don't expect to draw tears to your eyes, I do hope you'll listen and remember what I say."

At this juncture Mrs. Dolby's tears began to fall and her chin to quiver, and, being too busy with her emotions, she did not even look Mr. Dolby's way. Swallowing at the lump in her throat, she said:

"Samuel, I've allus kinder felt that in case of my death you'd marry ag'in, and it's allus made me feel a little edgewise, but a change has come over me. It come two weeks ago. I'm now resigned to your takin' a second wife. In fact, I think it's better you should. Mrs. Teachout was sayin' to me the other day that if I dropped off you'd marry ag'in inside of four weeks, as you'd want somebody to comb your hair and cut your toenails; but I don't think you'd be as mean as that. You'd wait at least three months, wouldn't you?"

Mr. Dolby snored in reply, and taking this as an answer in the affirmative, Mrs. Dolby went on:

"The usual time is a year, but I ain't askin' you to wait that long for me. I've been a hardworkin' wife, and I've allus saved every bit of the soap-grease and made the tea last in a way to surprise you, but I ain't askin' for any praise. I'm old and humbly and nigh-sighted, and I can't blame you if you kick up your heels arter I'm gone. Shall you go on a bridal tower with your second wife, Samuel? I ain't askin' 'cause I'm jealous, you know, but jest out of curiosity. When we got married all the bridal tower we had was to go to the circus and come home in a thunderstorm, but if you want to go to Niagara Falls with your new wife don't stop on my account."

As Mr. Dolby hadn't been asked a direct question there was no call for him to wake up, and as Mrs. Dolby felt like weeping she had a fairly good time at it before saying further:

"I did think at one time that if you married a chit of a girl I'd come back and sit on the footboard of the bed and haunt you, but I've changed my mind about it. It ain't in me to be mean. While it 'pears to me that you'd better marry a widder woman about 40 years old, if you decide on a girl of 20, it ain't for me to raise no row. While a widder woman would be at work sewin' patches on your trousers and makin' apple butter, a gal-wife would want to be swingin' in a hammock or playin' the melodeon, but it's your own lookout. The papers are full of gal-wives runnin' away with tin peddlers, and you must hev read of 'em as well as me. Was you thinkin' of a gal-wife or a widder, Samuel?"

Mr. Dolby combined a sigh and a snore and stood neutral, and, after hanging on to her chin to stop its shaking, Mrs. Dolby continued:

"I was goin' to ask you to think of me once in a while when I was gone, but I don't want to give you trouble. You'll hev 'nuff to think of with your new wife, and, as I'll be flyin' around in heaven, I'll be all right. Once in a while, however—once in a while, when your new wife spiles the bread, kicks the cat outdoors, breaks the nose off the teapot and kicks in the head of the vinegar barrel, I wish you'd jist remember how patient and savin' I was. Shall you hev a new pump put into the well for your second wife, Samuel? The old one has bin out of order fur nine years, you know, and you've got to pumpety-pump for ten minits to git any water. It'll be jest like her to insist on a red pump with a blue handle."

There was no change in the situation as far as Mr. Dolby was concerned. He still slept, and he still sighed and snored.

"And I s'pose you'll whitewash the pigpen and henroost and hev' new shingles on the roof of the house. When I want 5 cents fur peppermint essence to settle my stummick, it takes a week to git it out of you, but if your second wife wants $25 fur furbelows you'll hev' to hand it right over or hev a fuss. She won't make one corset last her fur six years, and she won't go barefut to save her shoes. However, as I said before, what will it be to me? I'll be flappin' my wings and hevin' a blissful time, and if you ain't happy I shan't know it nor worry about it. About my dying! Samuel—do you feel like you'd care to kiss me afore I go?"

Mr. Dolby drew up one leg and slowly straightened it out again, but he made no verbal answer.

"It's leven years or more since you kissed me, and I shouldn't hev' asked you now if I wasn't a-goin' to perish. It's of no consekence, however. You kin save 'em all fur your second wife. There'll probably be 10,000 angels waitin' at the gate to kiss me, and that'll do fur me. I wanted to say a word about my clothes. They are purty old, and your second wife will make fun of 'em, but I don't want you to let her use 'em fur mop rags. It would be jest like her, but if you don't want to save 'em to remember me by then you kin bundle 'em up and drop 'em in the pigpen. Stand up fur me that much anyhow, won't you, even if I hevn't got but three teeth left."

The Deacon must have been dreaming that he was a horse, for he worked his ears.

"The Japs have got mad again, Mrs. Fletcher says, and this time they are real mad and are going to shoot. She says they have a gun that will throw a bomb 500 miles, and we have not one that will throw 50. They will just stand off 500 miles and bombard, and where will we be? She thinks I may be the first one killed."

Had she been looking at the deacon, which she wasn't, she might have seen the corners of his mouth twitch. More sobs, and she went on:

"You are a man, Samuel, and you can dodge bombs, but I can't; I've got to be hit. I shall be hit. You wanted it so or you would have dug a hole in the back yard for me to hide in. I am old and homely and lame, and, of course, you want to get rid of me. I've seen it all along for years past, and now it's right at hand. A bomb will come whizzing and I will be gone!"

The deacon gave a snort, which he turned into a snore, and after sobbing 11 times and sighing nine, the sad wife sadly said:

"Samuel, I've been a good wife to you. I've made over 30 barrels of soft soap since we were married, and I can't begin to tell how many carpetrags I've sewed. I've allus tried my hardest to help you get along; but, as I said, I'm old and lame and homely, and I don't blame you for wanting a Japanese bomb to strike me. Then you can get married to some 16-year-old girl and go around to circuses and picnics. You can stay down cellar while the Japs bombard."

More snores.

"But while I'm willing to die for your sake, Samuel, I don't want to be killed by a bomb. It would jest tear me all to pieces, Mrs. Fletcher says, and there'd be no funeral. I've thought of a better way. I brung in the ax while you was gone, and I'm going to ask you to knock me in the head with it. Hit me jest as hard as you can and bust my skull in!"

Mr. Dolby woke up and sat up, surprised that he had been asleep. He saw Mrs. Dolby before him, and he saw that she was weeping, but he picked up his pipe, stood on his feet, stretched and yawned and then went out to fasten the kitchen door, wind up the clock and go to bed. She waited for a while, hoping he would look or speak to her, but as he did neither before vanishing into the family bedroom as if she did not exist, she suddenly dried her tears and put the perishing business afar off. Following him up after a moment, she threw quite a note of cheerfulness into her voice as she said:

"If it's a good day fur it tomorrow, Samuel, I think I'll start in and make some more soft soap!"

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If He Had Only Thought!

The pretty storekeeper was unpacking and assorting some new goods when her best young man entered. She stooped behind the counter a moment and arose with a flushed face.

"I'm glad to see you're stocking up," he said.

There's an unaccountable coldness between them now.—Judge.

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