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BILL SLIMMER'S WIDOW.

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Bill Slimmer was not slim, as his name indicated, nor was he half so good-for-nothing by nature as he had the universal credit of being. In fact, he was a jolly good fellow. He had lived till well along in the thirties without any serious disturbance from Cupid's arrows, and, under the watchful care of his good Aunt Prudence, had always been so comfortably provided for in the way of dickeys and dinners that he had never thought seriously of needing a wife to fill his domestic offices for him. As he was not in love, he conceived of no particular reason why he should burden himself with the cares of a family when not in need of a servant.

Aunt Prudence Slimmer, unlike her nephew, was slimmer, even, by nature than by name. Early in her life, and while the gentle dews of a sweet romance hung tenderly over her maiden heart, her brother's wife, Bill Slimmer's mother, and likewise the mother of a host of other Slimmers, had paid the debt of overwrought nature and fallen asleep by life's rugged wayside.

Aunt Prudence heroically took up the burden where her sister-in-law had laid it down. She nursed the young Slimmers through measles, mumps, whooping-cough, scarlatina and chicken-pox, and cleansed them of divers skin and scalp diseases of even more aggravating nature, which at some time or other they had all caught at school. And, finally, when the older Slimmers grew up and married, and Josiah Slimmer, the discouraged progenitor of the flock, breathed his last out of pure laziness, and was buried out of her sight, and she had only herself and Bill Slimmer to provide for, the good spinster sold her cooking-stove and coal-scuttle, and packed her dishes, sewing machine and feather beds into boxes, with her patchwork quilts and hand-woven table-linen, and embarked from the clumsy dock hard by her seaside home away down in Maine for her new destination, Portland, Oregon.

Here, like Dorcas of old, Aunt Prudence busied herself making coats. Her business prospered and grew, and she, having an eye to profits, invested in real estate, which in time advanced in value till it became a handsome property.

Bill Slimmer attended school when he had to, and played poker whenever he could steal away from Aunt Prudence, and as he grew older and bigger, and finally to manhood, followed the example of other men on the street, and sucked with enterprising regularity at the crooked end of a long pipe-stem, and in many other ways proved his masculine superiority over his weak-minded aunt, until one day—the doctor said it was grief that did it, though her neighbors said it was over-work—she died suddenly of heart disease, leaving her ungrateful nephew in excellent circumstances.

Bill Slimmer felt many compunctions of conscience as he gazed upon the furrowed face of Aunt Prudence, so white and shrunken in its coffin, and actually shed a tear or two when he caressed, for the last time, her seamed and battered hands, as they lay folded across her hollow bosom tied with a lute-string ribbon; and he was thoroughly wretched after the funeral. The little shop, with its tiny back kitchen and wee bedrooms, reminded him of Aunt Prudence; but the remembrance would not cook his dinners, sew on his buttons or pay his board. So, to drown his sorrow, Bill Slimmer redoubled his former vigilance at the gaming table. Aunt Prudence could not question him now as to where he spent his evenings, nor could she look at him, as of yore, with her sad, reproachful eyes, and warn him of the consequences of his folly.

And so, Bill Slimmer went on from bad to worse, until he had squandered the whole of his aunt's hard-earned property; and then, of course, he found himself adrift in the world, penniless. He had no trade nor profession. It would have been well for him if he had been able to wield the tailor's goose that at last found its way to the pawnbroker's, where it yet lies, unredeemed and for sale.

But Bill Slimmer did not propose to go to work for a living, even if he had known how. So, after he had disposed of the last remnant of his legacy, he bethought himself for the first time of the expedient which many other men have tried before and succeeded in—he would marry. And, as young girls with dower were hard to find, he would look after the relic of some departed shade, who had left a patrimony and a woman, which combined would make up for him what he had lost in Aunt Prudence.

And Bill Slimmer reformed. I have told you that he was not slim by nature. On the contrary, his proportions were ample, his physique was good, and, aside from a preponderance of flesh about the lower face and neck, giving him a deided Hancock jaw, he was rather handsome.

A few miles out from Portland, near a highway which shall here be designated as the "Jericho Road," lived Mrs. Patience Leigh, a widow with two children, who had been left by an absconding husband as a widow without dower, but who had, since her divorce, been the recipient of a two-hundred-acre farm as a gift or devise from her father, the Hon. Jacob Boon, lately deceased.

Bill Slimmer, who was as strong an advocate of masculine supremacy as Petroleum V. Nasby is of negro inferiority, and who felt the same interest in Mrs. Leigh that Nasby feels in Bascom or the post office, mounted the semi-weekly stage and rode out to Mrs. Leigh's, in search of country board. The widow was glad of his company, for it was lonely on the farm, and her two little daughters were away at school.

Bill Slimmer was an excellent Summer boarder. He arrayed himself in the decamped husband's over-clothes, and cleaned up the chicken-house, and mended the pig-trough, and made a new windlass for the well, and patched the broken door-step. He could sing, too; and Mrs. Leigh, who could play accompaniments in tolerable fashion, sang with him, often till the hour was late. In short, the widow and the bachelor fell in love, and, contrary to the former's intention, he was soon desperately in earnest about the widow herself, though he had only intended to become enamored of her property.

Of course, Bill Slimmer grew sentimental. Lovers always do. Of course, he regaled the willing widow with gushing rhapsodies in the shape of promises to "love, cherish and protect," all of which met a capital climax in the marriage ceremony, in which he placed the ring upon her finger with the hackneyed and often meaningless accompaniment, "With all my worldly goods I thee endow."

And Bill Slimmer became a farmer. I do not mean that he handled the axe, or followed the plow. Not a bit of it. He bossed things.

The seasons sped on, and Bill Slimmer became a father. This interesting event happened three times in as many consecutive years. Expenses increased, and his income grew alarmingly less. Something had to be done to keep the wolf from the door. Bossing things is poor business on a two-hundred-acre farm, when two-thirds of it is timber without a market.

Bill Slimmer mounted a neighbor's wagon and came to Portland to look around. The little shop formerly owned by Aunt Prudence was vacant, and the little tin sign, "Miss P. Slimmer, Tailoress," which had been used by its last tenant to mend broken window-panes, was still doing duty in that opaque capacity.

A bright idea struck Bill Slimmer. He would rent the little shop for Mrs. P. Slimmer, and put a little lot of filled cloths and notions in it, and let Mrs. P. Slimmer support him, as Miss P. Slimmer had done before her. The word "Miss" on the sign was of no consequence, even if it was inappropriate.

It was not hard to convince Mrs. Slimmer that a change was necessary. Bill Slimmer was a good talker—a capital talker, in fact—and her own judgment combined with his eloquence to induce her to sell her farm and turn the money over to him for investment in filled cloths and furniture for the store.

A purchaser was found for the farm, who paid the little sum of two thousand dollars, cash in hand.

"It's your money, you see, dear," said the considerate Slimmer, "and of course you'll invest it to suit yourself. I don't approve of women's rights and kindred nonsense, but I think it well for them to look after the property they get by gift, devise or inheritance, so that the will of the testator may be respected, you know."

If Mrs. Slimmer thought the will of the rightful legatee ought also to have something to do with it, she didn't say so; but she did catch herself wondering, sometimes, as she worried constantly with the numerous added responsibilities of her Slimmer state of coverture, why it was that her legal representative and head had never exhibited a little enterprise on his own account. She also wondered if she should be able to manage a store. But she dismissed her forebodings, and tried hard to look upon the brighter side of her domestic zenith—if there were one.

And Bill Slimmer went off to town to deposit his wife's two thousand dollars in a safe, till she should be able to be removed, with the little Slimmers, including the babe a month old, and fit up the defunct Miss P. Slimmer's former habitation for business. It had been long since Bill had been permitted by fickle Fortune to carry money, and it was not wonderful that he was a little vain over the golden twenties that Mrs. Slimmer had carefully tied in a little salt-sack, with blue letters on the side, and consigned to his keeping.

In a fortnight the move was made, and Mrs. Slimmer, though languid and feeble, felt that she had more need of making an effort than was ever

imagined by the attendants of Mrs. Dombey; so she asked her husband to draw the money he had placed on deposit for her. Bill Slimmer started off with alacrity to do her bidding, only to return, crestfallen.

"You see, wife," he began, with a look that would have been haggard but for the flesh upon his jaws, "I—I—I—a debt can't be outlawed in Oregon under six years, can it?"

"No, William. But why do you ask? I don't owe anything."

"But I do, or, rather, I did, Patience. And your money is all gone."

"William, you can't mean it!" cried Mrs. Slimmer, her pale face turning paler yet, as she grasped the bedpost for support.

"Yes, Patience, I do mean it. And I would that I were dead! You see, dear, I used to be rakish and wild, and I spent corks o' money, and got deeply into debt. And I owed Jolly Miller a big sum. I never meant to owe it, 'pon my word. But when I come in to 'Squire Nettleton's store and put your money on deposit, and took a receipt for it in my own name, it was then, according to law or custom, and under what they call the law of coverture, my individual property. I told 'em it was yours, Patience; but my certificate of deposit, which was all I had to show for it, was made in my own name, and so I couldn't go back on the black and white."

"But I can hold the money in spite of them under a lawsuit, William. Isn't there some sort of a statute that tells about a writ of replevin?"

But Bill Slimmer had lost his grip. He had no heart to see a lawyer and work up the case. The poor fellow had the raw material in him for any amount of sturdy rustling; but he had always been supported and protected by women, and now that his last womanly resource was chock-a-block with writs and lawyers' fees, and the woman herself was tied up in the shop and nursery with a household of little Slimmers, there was nothing left for him to do but to go off and die—and he did it.

Mrs. P. Slimmer shed a few tears in the solitude of her back shop, and followed the remains of her lord and master, provider, law-giver and head, to Lone Fir Cemetery, where they were buried from her sight by a secret society in glittering badges.

She was compelled to confess to herself, as the three young Slimmers clamored for the food she could not furnish, that she was unable to see that she had gained increased immunity from care or responsibility in the long-run by marrying a Summer boarder who could only clean a chicken-house, mend a door-step, and boss things.

The little tin sign belonging to Miss P. Slimmer, Tailoress, still served as a window-pane in the front shop, and Mrs. P. Slimmer employed a painter, whose coat she repaired as compensation, to paint out the inappropriate "Miss," and substitute the more appropriate "Mrs." She hung the sign, and awaited customers with fear and trembling. Had she known of Miss P. Slimmer's goose at the pawnbroker's, she might have purchased the same at a small advance; but she did not, so she used a flat-iron instead. She had no knowledge of the business, and of course made many failures. But she lived economically, and profited by her mistakes, and soon became mistress of her craft, and is now at the head of one of the most popular clothing emporiums of the city.

And Bill Slimmer's widow, whose offers of marriage from the supporting and protecting sex number three per month upon an average, remains a widow and is incorrigible. Though they think she is sane enough on all other subjects, the oiled and perfumed gentlemen who go to her for a faultless fit in their finest unmentionables, are unanimous in the opinion that she is crazy upon the subject of woman's rights.

Good reader, my story is the barest possible outline of a life history that might well be elaborated into a volume. Bill Slimmer was no ideal product of my brain, nor was Aunt Prudence Slimmer a myth, nor Mrs. Patience Leigh a fictitious personage. Such characters, in all the various shades of life, are everywhere existing under a government that not only permits women to be deprived of their property "without due process of law," but stultifies itself continually by its failure to guarantee to every citizen the equal protection of the laws. Bill Slimmer's widow is not mad, most noble freemen, but in all her demands for woman's liberty she speaks forth the words of truth and soberness.

The *Independent* is the name of a paper started a few weeks since at Pomeroy, W. T., to be devoted to the interests of that town. That Mr. Mays, the publisher, has an eye to business, is proven by the fact that he desires to know of any lady compositor who wants to marry.

Miss Mary E. Strong, one of Salem's most accomplished young ladies, has been engaged as teacher in the La Creole Academy at Dallas for another year.

THE CAPITAL.

MRS. A. S. DUNIWAY UNMASKS SOME DOUBLE DEALING AND DESCRIBES SOME PRE-TEXTS FOR ADJOURNING.

To listen to "the reading of the bills" by the busy clerks, leads one to wonder how it has been possible to get along heretofore with so little legislation. Some of the measures proposed are salutary, some sanitary, some necessary, and some absurd. Statutes are inaugurated for erecting an insane asylum; to provide that married women may sell and convey real estate without a question as to the legality of their contracts; to incorporate several towns that we know are badly in need of sidewalks; to exempt homesteads from attachment; to reduce the lawful rate of interest to six per cent; to protect game and fish at certain seasons; to allow defendants to testify; to destroy noxious weeds, and to establish and protect the rights of married women.

The lobby is more extensively patronized than usual at the commencement of a session when no Senator is to be chosen. Dr. Hawthorne is here, looking out for his interests in the insane from one stand-point, and Mrs. Packard is engaged in a like business from another quarter. Mrs. P. is a more indefatigable lobbyist than the Doctor, but it is generally believed that what he lacks in persistence he makes up in coin. We do not think their interests will clash when mutually comprehended, as the Doctor is well known as a humane and successful physician and asylum superintendent, and Mrs. P. seems only to demand justice for the unfortunate wards in his care, which evidently they have already. But there is one thing connected with Mrs. P.'s filibustering to which all self-respecting women must take emphatic exception, and that is her sly but constant opposition to Woman Suffrage when talking with the Legislators. We have been informed by several members that she has gone to them, and, with a show of superior wisdom, informed them that she does "not approve of woman having the ballot." She has been the recipient of many favors and eulogies from Woman Suffragists in this State and Washington Territory, and has had the constant aid of the NEW NORTHWEST in her work (for Mrs. Packard and her books), and we deem it our duty, unpleasant though it be, to state publicly, so that every Legislator may read it, that she never speaks against the enfranchisement of woman to men except to tickle their imaginary vanity, and always advocates it among Woman Suffragists.

Had she ever said to us what she has said to members in opposition to woman's ballot, we should have punctured the bubble of her double dealing long ago. And here let us say to Legislators, once for all, that no woman who comes before them riding a personal hobby, and failing to comprehend or acknowledge the eternal principles of right and justice for all the people as set forth in the Declaration of Independence and enforced through the free ballot, is a representative woman of the period. We wish Mrs. Packard no harm. We hope she will psychologize every Legislator, as she did our humble self, into paying her twelve dollars for her set of books. There is many a grain of truth in them, and much that will open their eyes in new directions, as they did our own, to the need of the ballot for woman. We hope, too, that they will pass a bill granting to the insane the inalienable rights of the free post office. Mrs. Packard possesses wonderful intelligence, and we are glad to see her at work selling her books, which is the *finale* to her lobbying. The benefit of this free advertising is cheerfully given her, and we stand ready to aid her now and always in securing the freedom of woman through the ballot. But we have no patience with the silly notion that honorable men must be cajoled like puppies or flattered like babies to induce them to favor some woman's pet hobby, while the great principle of equality before the law is, to secure this favor, trampled by her in the dust. We acknowledge Mrs. Packard's power, having felt it; but we have felt the reaction also, and are willing to wait till others feel it for their good opinion of this kindly but earnest criticism.

As is usual with men who are wearing out their lives in the service of an ungrateful country by legislation, there is much time given to adjourning. On Friday, at 2 P. M., the climax of excuses for a recess was reached by a House resolution demanding adjournment till Monday at 2 P. M., to give the members a chance to "mourn" for an ex-member of two years ago who had died a year since, doubtless without a thought of so expensive a lamentation over his taking-off. The Senate also "killed a man" for a like purpose, reminding us of the man who once wanted to borrow a black waistcoat, and applied to a clothier for the loan of one, giving as a reason therefore that "his aunt had died six months before, and he wanted to take a short mourn."

A. S. D.
House of Representatives, Sept. 17, 1880.