

Bowser Catches On

And it's Mrs. Bowser Who Gets the Worst of It.

By M. QUAD.
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Bowser had been good for a week—that is, good for him. He hadn't been up in a balloon or down in a submarine. He hadn't planned a trip to either pole. He hadn't had a row with the street car conductor or told the butcher what he thought of him for sending so much bone with the meat. He hadn't hustled a tramp out of the yard or had he threatened the arrest of a street peddler. But in place of this he had been very arrogant about the house. He had talked about "my" house, "my" grocery, "my" friends and a whole lot of other "mys," as if he was the whole show and Mrs. Bowser was nothing at all. She was both amused and provoked, and after several days she wrote a letter to her mother. In the letter she said:

"Mr. Bowser has a case of the 'big head.' I think you had better come out



HE BACKED AGAINST A FENCE AND READ EVERY WORD OF IT.

here and apply the remedy. I want you to come unexpectedly and catch him in the act."

And the mother wrote back: "I will come next Friday afternoon, and I will attend to Samuel's case with promptness and dispatch, as I well know how to do. I can find my way over from the depot, and I will arrive about an hour before he comes up to dinner. Let him act up and canter around, for his time is short."

On the day Mrs. Bowser wrote her letter she handed it to Mr. Bowser to drop into the letter box on the corner. He carried it along in his hand, and as he was about to mail it he noticed that the envelope was not sealed.

"Huh!" he grunted. "Just like a woman. This letter is to her mother, and I suppose it contains a hundred dollar bill? Guess I will look in and see."

And he backed up against a fence and read every word of it. He was thereby put in possession of Mrs. Bowser's nice little plot to take him down a peg or two.

"The old woman will answer this in a day or two," he mused, "and I will get hold of the answer in some way. Then we will see who is the biggest man. Acting up, am I? Need taking down a peg or two. H'm! Nice little bear trap they are going to set for me."

Like 50 women out of 100, when Mrs. Bowser received her letter she reads it and then places it on the mantelpiece or piano until she gets time to read it two or three times more. Mr. Bowser had only to read it once to lay his little plan.

When the train from Okomas arrived in the city at 5 o'clock in the afternoon Mr. Bowser's mother-in-law was one of the passengers. As usual, she had a folded umbrella in one hand and her quaint old carpet bag in the other. She was disputing with the hackman as to the price to be paid when her smiling son-in-law approached with extended hand and a bland smile. He not only wrung her hand like one glad to see another, but he kissed her—yes, sir, Mr. Bowser positively kissed his mother-in-law and that before fifty people!

"Why—why—why?" she stammered, in her great confusion.

"Why, mother, dear, I'm awfully glad to see you," he said.

"But I—I didn't expect you to meet me. Did Sarah tell you to come?"

"Oh, I just happened to be here on business. You are going to the house, of course?"

"Why—er—yes."

"Then come along, and never mind the back. We'll whirl over in an auto. Nothing is too rich for my dear mother."

The old lady was so paralyzed that she dropped both satchel and umbrella, and when he had picked them up she slowly followed him out of the depot and wondered if she had arrived at Oshkosh or Yaphank, and whether his name was Bowser or Jones. On the way over to the house he kept calling her "dear mother" and saying that he had been longing to see her for the last month, and she was so astonished that for once in her life she kept her mouth shut for fully five minutes.

As Mrs. Bowser had planned it, she was to lay down on the lounge a few minutes before Mr. Bowser would reach home for dinner. There would be camphor sprinkled around, and she would have a nice clean towel around her head. The mother would be seated upstairs, ready to play her part at a minute's notice. Mr. Bowser would burst into the hall in his usual impetuous way, and, smelling the camphor, he would strike back into the sitting room and demand of the half dead woman lying with closed eyes:

"Woman, what in the old Harry does this mean! Is it another of your infernal sick headaches? Can't I leave this house for a day and return without finding you keredopped with some ailment or other?"

"Oh, Samuel!" she murmured. "Don't 'oh, Samuel me!' he shouted, 'but tell me what's the matter. Have you got a chicken bone in your throat or has a rattlesnake bitten you?'"

And at this critical moment the mother-in-law would appear in the door, and the way she would go for Samuel Bowser and the way he would be crushed would long be remembered. But that little plot never developed.

Mrs. Bowser was on the front steps, looking up the street for the arrival of the expected mother, who probably would come on the street car, when an auto whirled around the corner and drove up to the gate and stopped with a grand flourish. In that auto were seated Mr. Bowser and her mother. They were not ghosts, but living human beings. Mr. Bowser raised his hat and gave a half cheer, and the old lady somehow managed to call out, "Howdy, Sarah?"

With tenderest hand and smiling like a June morning Mr. Bowser assisted his visitor to alight and conducted her up the steps and said to the puzzled and astonished wife:

"Isn't it splendid of her to come to visit us? She probably will want to return home in about a month, but we will keep her three months at least—six months—a whole year. Never, never shall we let the mother out of our sight again."

When the mother and daughter were alone upstairs the mother asked:

"Sarah, what in tarnation does this mean?"

"I—I don't know, mother."

"Well, he acts more like a bridegroom than a son-in-law. He never liked me, and I never liked him, and yet he is as juicy and tender toward me as a rare beefsteak. He said he was at the depot on business, but I don't believe it. I believe he must have got hold of my letter and is playing a joke on us. It doesn't look as if I would have a chance to do any crushing this trip."

The "crushing" was all in Mr. Bowser's hands, and Mrs. Bowser was made the victim. Under the excuse that the house might be broken into if left to guard itself he invited the mother-in-law to go to the movies with him while Mrs. Bowser remained at home. "Dear mother" accepted the invitation, and her daughter shed a few tears during the lonely hours she had to pass.

The old lady had never been to a zoo. Mr. Bowser took her to one while Mrs. Bowser had to remain at home to see about the dinner.

One evening at the dinner table Mr. Bowser announced that he had received an invitation to deliver an address before the Gulliver club.

"And you will go?" asked Mrs. Bowser.

"Not by a long shot. I am going to teach mother how to play euchre this evening."

And he did. The next day the mother said to the daughter:

"Sarah, this is intolerable. We must change it."

"But how can we?" was asked.

"There is but one way—let him be Bowser again. I liked his old ways better than his new ones."

"So did I."

And the "dear mother" took an early opportunity to say:

"Samuel, my son, you are acting too darned good. Please make a change."

And a few hours later as Mr. Bowser came upon Mrs. Bowser using the carpet sweeper he saw tears in her eyes as she looked up at him.

"Oh, Samuel, you are too good—too good! Please go back to last week and be bad again. You have punished me enough!"

"Tranged if I don't be a bad man with a big B and carry two guns and a knife!" he laughed.

And next time you hear Mr. Bowser you will learn that he has resumed business at the old stand.

Do You Believe This?

A plumber once presented to a millionaire a bill of \$100 for mending a pipe.

But the millionaire handed the plumber a dollar note and said severely:

"Receipt that bill of yours in full."

"But—but—" said the plumber.

"Receipt it in full," the millionaire repeated. "I used to be a plumber, man, myself."

The plumber at this gave a great start, receipted the bill and handed the millionaire 50 cents change.

Look Before You Leap.

The cake she made looked fine enough. To justify her pride.

But when we came to eat the stuff we pretty nearly died!

She said she could not comprehend what trouble there could be.

She'd followed closely to the end the cookbook recipe.

It certainly seemed strange the cake should turn out such a mess.

Unless she made some sad mistake. Despite her carefulness.

The book proved such the truth to be. Beyond the slightest doubt.

For from the simple recipe six pages were torn out!

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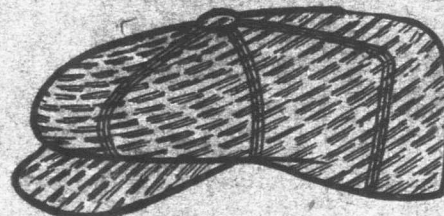
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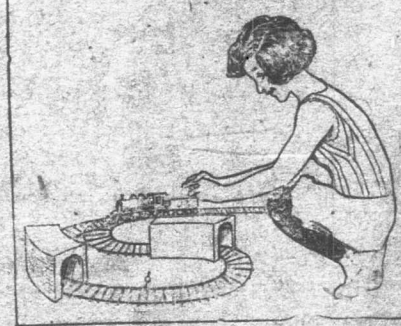
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