

that a storm was brooding, like a hen on eggs, so I left just then to renew my struggles with fish-hooks and continue my flighty feats of horsemanship. Do you blame me?

In an argument of this kind—when you are getting the worst of it—the best plan is to say no more. It is the most effective way to close up with and makes an admirable peroration as well.

It is not without reason, then, that I have a painful recollection of my landlady *pro tem*.

It was during the second week of my visit that she button-holed me one bright afternoon just as I was going fishing and started off on a long harangue on the subject of women's rights—which subject I afterwards learnt was a favorite hobby with her. It seemed she had lived out west in her younger days, and made the acquaintance of Mrs. Bloomer, who had created a considerable influence upon her mind. I was in a hurry to get away, as the horse and democrat were standing at the door and I had left the bait in a tin can in the sun without earth, in which condition I had previously learnt it did not thrive very well.

When she released me, however, I found the rig stored away, the horse stabled, and the worms, which had caused me so much exertion to hunt, baked to a mass by the heat. She had been talking, with the occasional interruption of a hiccup, or a sneeze, for three steady hours. My afternoon was spoilt and my temper ruffled, but there was one redeeming feature in connection with it, the talk had gratified the old lady, and I thought, after our former encounter, some restitution on my part necessary. When she began, though I had no idea it was going to last so long—just a few words, I thought, would be sufficient—on fashions, or children, or chickens or something of that sort, and then I could flit away and hie me to the land, or rather waters, of black bass and perch; but as has been already intimated I was sadly mistaken; there was very little small-talk about my landlady, she did everything, conversationally, on a large and extensive scale, as I was made aware of then and there.

On the tenth day of my visit she asked me to go with her to attend a meeting of some women's aid society that was to come off in the village. Of course I could not very well refuse after our friendly relations of the previous day. I said nothing at the time, but in the evening intimated my intention to the youngest son of starting a man's protective association with aims towards the preservation of unoffending males, from the influence of such domineering females; and objects that would guarantee to them the freest pursuance of their business from the interruption or molestation of interfering women.

Of course I had to go with her. It would have been bad policy not to have done so.

The democrat was brought out and the horse hitched to it. I envied the hired man as he slunk away. He saw the jealous look in my eye and laughed inwardly to himself.

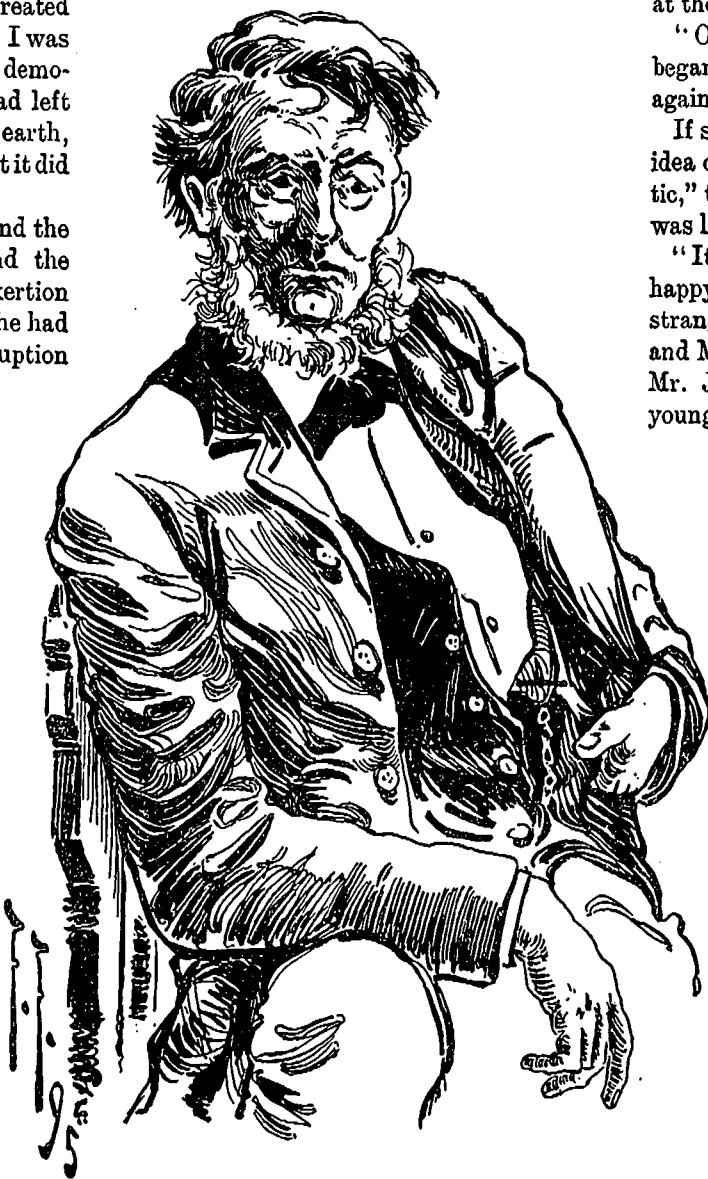
To add to my discomfort, the old lady

would not let me drive. She said she would give me the whip instead if that would do, just as if I were a child.

All the way along she kept up an incessant clatter in that strange tone so peculiar to her, the children on the road looking up in the air and across the country to see where the unusual sound was coming from.

When we reached the schoolhouse where the meeting was to be held I found myself the sole male representative in the building, the others had too much hard common sense than attend.

It was an odd gathering was that ladies' aid re-union with my landlady as the principal speaker—a position which I thought her very well qualified to fulfil. They debated all sorts of insane questions and finally wound with a highly satisfactory resolution condemning all



MY LANDLORD LOOKED DEJECTED.

that they had previously said, which I thought an admirable plan, seeing my landlady had contributed most of it.

It seems that she was a stranger to the people, that is, she had not attended any of the meetings before, but nevertheless she was not backward at coming forward on this occasion.

The president called on her for a few remarks and she forthwith began a two hours' oration on her favorite topic, launching forth into a tirade against men generally, abusing them with a vehemence I had never heard her use before, and only stopping to particularize when she alluded to me, whom she frequently held up as a "horrible example."

She began by saying she would give them a little sound advice on womans' rights, but

wound up by telling them how to run their club.

After the reading of the minutes by the secretary, who was a tall grave matron with eyeglasses, a little fierce-looking woman entered and my landlady said she was the gossip of the village. I wondered where she came in and when they were going to end. I soon found, however, that the fierce little woman was quite unable to keep pace with my landlady, who now rose to receive her, and the following entertaining and very instructive dialogue ensued:

"Oh, how do you do, Mrs. Brown," said my landlady, "I am so pleased to see you. It does my heart good to see your radiant visage again. I was so sorry to hear of Mr. Brown's illness, and the children, how are they?"

Mr. Brown, I afterwards learnt, had an attack at the time of delirium tremens.

"Oh, you dear, sweet, sympathetic angel," began the stranger, "I am delighted to see you again."

If she was in earnest, she had a very queer idea of the meaning of "sweet and sympathetic," thought I, and her conception of an angel was likewise widely at variance with mine.

"It is as good as a sunbath to gaze at your happy features once more," continued the stranger, "the children are splendid, thank you, and Mr. Brown is improving rapidly. I hope Mr. Jones is feeling as well and looking as young as you are, Mis' Jones, and that dear little Tommy (the youngest son) has got safely over the fever."

At the mention of "fever," and "Tommy," all the members present look aghast and quietly edge away as far as possible from my landlady, for Tommy, it seems, had the scarlet fever about three years and a half previous to my visit.

"Have you heard the latest about the Smiths?" asked my landlady, blinking the last question.

"Well, I heard Mrs. White say they were awfully mean and wouldn't pay their rent, but I hardly believe that—you know what a gossip Mrs. White is?"

"Oh, yes, but that's quite true, and Fannie told Mary, the baker said he wouldn't let them have any more bread until they paid for the last. But, my gracious don't tell anyone; I wouldn't have it get around for the world; I was just telling a few friends yesterday, and I told Mrs. Green and

Mrs. Black the day before, but I'm sure they won't gossip. You know I wouldn't have it get around for anything. I tell you, but I don't want you to mention it, and I wouldn't like anyone else to hear." She raised her voice at this point, for the benefit of those remote and by that means obtained the attention of every one in the room. "Their landlord's hired man told Mary last night that he was going to put the bailiff in on them to-morrow," continued my talkative landlady, again alluding to the unfortunate Smiths, "Mary is such a good girl, she always tells me everything. I told Fannie this morning and she told the milkman, but I wouldn't have it get around for the world; it's too bad and they're so poor; but I want you to promise never to tell a living soul