

eligible men of the Alley were ware of matrimony with the widow.

"I'm rigged," said Bakke, as he jerked open the door some ten minutes after their discovery of the fire. "We'll have to hustle."

The fire had evidently begun in the kitchen, and was rapidly spreading. The Alley, roused by the shouts of our friends, fell to work with a will. Ladders were speedily placed, a bucket brigade formed, and soon the flames were at bay.

Standing on the sidewalk, wringing her hands and moaning "I'll have to go to the poorhouse, I'll have to go to the poorhouse," was the widow, clad in her nightdress, a short coat and a pair of pink bedroom slippers.

"My clothes, O may clothes," she wailed—"I've lost them all—I haven't a thing left, I'll have to go to the poorhouse!"

Many a manly heart thrilled to that appeal of helpless womanhood, and more than one womanly voice hissed into a neighbour's ear, "You'd think she'd be ashamed to carry on so—an' her as never sews a stitch nor does sorra a washing, from one year's end to the next!"

"Phat do yez suppose she's afther?" inquired Mrs. Kelly of Mrs. O'Rourke.

"Hivin knows—I don't," snapped that lady. "I've been askin' her till I'm tired to come home wid me till the shebeen's patched up, an' she'll do nawthin at all."

"My clothes, oh, my clothes!" mournfully came from behind them, and in Irish exasperation, the two women turned with looks of withering scorn and left their sister in affliction.

"Glory be; that was as hot a job as anny I iver handled," said Bakke, as he came down the ladder after the fire had been vanquished.

His chum touched his arm, as he pointed to where the widow still remained a short distance away.

"Oh, how can I ever thank you enough?" she sobbed, as the men paused awkwardly before her.

"Sure, 'twas nawthin at all, at all," said Bakke simply, and Barnes eagerly echoed the fiction.

"But oh, if I only had saved my clothes; they're all gone—every poor, miserable rag I owned. O-oh dear,

whatever will I do?" and the widow broke down again.

"Come home wid me as I've ast yez to a hundred times this noight," snapped Mrs. Kelly. "Or wid me," said Mrs. O'Rourke. "Sure, an' yez know yez is welcome."

"O, dear Mr. Barnes, and you, you dear, good Mr. Bakke, I shall never forget this," sobbed the widow. "But oh, my clothes are g-gone, all gone!" Still weeping, she suffered the women to lead her across the street and through Mrs. Kelly's front door.

"Sure, 'tis too bad she lost all thim cloes," remarked Bakke thoughtfully, as the chums turned homeward. "I was just wondering if we cudn't maybe all kind a chip in an help her out."

"So was I," eagerly said Billy Barnes. "Let's get all the fellows who helped tonight to chip in and then it'll not seem so personal-like. I'm dead beat now, and it's me for the slumber couch till morning—barring any more fires," he added.

"Plase Hivin, wan's lots for the night," said Bakke, as they turned into bed.

Next day the "Widow's Aid," as Barnes called it, had netted a hundred dollars and over—for the men of the Alley were generous and fond of the widow—had she not offered to be a mother to every one of them? And women like that were not met every day. A deputation was appointed to present the widow with this "little token of esteem," as they called it—and the chums were chosen for the duty. At the last moment, however, Bakke backed out of going, refusing point blank, so it was Alec Ladd who went over with Barnes to the Kelly home that evening.

Naturally, they felt diffident about beginning, being morally certain of the view Mrs. Kelly would take of their action—and so it was nearly eleven when the widow's surreptitious yawns warned them that they must broach the subject.

"Go ahead, Alec," said Barnes, in an undertone.

"Do it yourself," returned Ladd in the same breath. Then he began lamely:

"We—ah—we—it's a terrible loss you've met with, Mrs. Briggs,—an—we—ah—"

"Yes, Mr. Ladd," said the widow, sweetly. "We're hoping you won't take