

How the Widow Raised the Mortgage

My friend Bascom and I were idling away a warm summer afternoon in a pretty New England town, which for a long time must go nameless, but which lay at the confluence of a river with the sea. Lying down a leafy lane which led to the river, we were confronted by a sign bearing the legend—

"MORTGAGE BY H. GRUMMETT."

Immediately we decided that we wanted a boat. A wooden hand nail set to the sign pointed out the direction of the establishment, which proved to be a gaily painted barge moored to the shore and approached by a gang plank. With its little white house at each end, it looked not unlike the Nubian ark of our child hood, while a dozen boats of all colors, which were tethered to its side, did well for the animals waiting to be fed with passengers.

The sunlight filtered through a deep awning on to the upper deck, illuminating the bald crown of Captain Grummett himself, who was seated in a folding chair mending some part of his wardrobe. He was a short, fat man, snugly encased in a blue dannel shirt and trousers of true sailor cut and elaborately embroidered in true man-of-war style. A fringe of red hair surrounded his bald pate, and on his nose was a pair of large silver spectacles.

This highly colored Noah responded to our request for a boat with professional promptness and agility. When we had paid him, however, and the boat was ready, we found it pleasant to loaf on the barge thus to row in the sunlight. In this we were at first discouraged by the Captain, who occupied the only chair and went on with his sewing in silence.

But when he discovered that I had been in the navy, and when he had, moreover, been made to chuckle by some of my lighthearted friend Bascom's irrepressible nonsense, he gradually relaxed, and after we had sat out our twenty-five cents' worth of boat fare, he asked us to come again.

We went again and again, buying our right to sit on the holy-stoned deck beneath the striped awning by hiring a boat, while we smoked our pipes and talked, or listened to the Captain's yarns. Finally we so undervalued the wary mariner's reserve that it gave way altogether, and he actually invited us into his living room in one of the dock houses, a beautifully neat little place, shining with white paint and polished brass, and fitted up in all respects like a regular ship's cabin.

Bascom celebrated our promotion to the quarter-deck, as he called it, by procuring from the village half a dozen of English ale—I have forgotten to mention, by the way, that the Captain was an Englishman—over which he indulged our host outrageously, declaring him the king of deep water sailors, a Neptune whom no man could know without becoming his devoted friend, and upon whom no woman could gaze without falling in love with his manly form and honest features. He then proposed three cheers for Captain Grummett, which he and I gave, and we drank that Captain Grummett's health. After which Bascom sang in a deep bass:

"Fifteen men on a dead man's chest,
Yo, ho, ho, and a bottle of rum,
and talked a lot of nonsense about the flying jib boom of friendship ever pointing to the harbor of good fellowship."

It was at this point of the proceedings that the Captain, who had been slowly sipping his ale and staring admiringly at Bascom, leaned forward, laid a pudgy forefinger on his arm, said: "You weren't far 'bout in what you said a minute ago."

"Far out!" exclaimed Bascom dramatically. "I was away in it, and was proceeding in the same strain when, noticing that the Captain still kept his finger on his arm and was looking at him with peculiar significance, he checked his flow of speech, and said: 'What particular part of my remarks do you refer to Captain?'"

"That about the women," said the Captain, still regarding him with mysterious gravity.

For a moment Bascom did not remember what he had said about women, and then it suddenly occurred to him, and he rose to the occasion.

"Now that you mention it, Captain," he said, "do you know, it has always been a wonder to me that a man like you should be allowed to live in this bachelor style. It's exceedingly snug and agreeable, of course, but I don't see how you manage to escape the women. I should think you would have been married long ago."

The Captain leaned back in his chair seemingly well satisfied, and then, taking off his spectacles and wiping them, said, "Why, Lord bless you, sir, I was married once. I was married and stayed married for fifteen years, pretty nigh, and then I buried her."

"She died, I suppose?" suggested Bascom.

"Yes, sir," replied the Captain, so lost in retrospection as not to observe Bascom's flippancy, "she died. I

was married nigh on to fifteen years, a term—nigh on, fifteen years lacking one month, two weeks, four days, and seven hours. I figured it from exact in the almanac. That's twelve years ago, and what's more, he added, "if I hadn't got wedded since, it hadn't been for lack of 'bopper-unity.' And the Captain again removed his glasses, this time to bestow upon Bascom a very knowing wink.

"Of course," said Bascom, "any one can see that with half an eye."

"You may 'ave noticed," continued our elderly friend, that a good many women come down here to the barge. What do they come for? Some of 'em comes for boats. They says they do, mind ye." And again the Captain bestowed upon Bascom that portentous wink, immediately after relapsing into a dignified silence, from which all of Bascom's gross flattery and palatable leads failed to draw him.

But on our very next visit the Captain drifted around to the subject again. I had asked him if he made all of his own clothes.

"Yes, sir," he replied, "every stitch of 'em. What's the good of payin' 'nother man to do what I can do myself a sight more to me 'low'n satisfaction? Then there's the matter of grub," he continued, "I looks wot I want, and I cooks it just the way I wants it, an' there I ain't no 'oman makin' 'nout she knows wot I wants better 'n I do myself. Sometimes I takes it in me 'e'd I want apple sauce an' bread an' butter for supper. 'W'y not? 'Apples is cheap; I buys 'em by the bushel. Or maybe it's a fish wot I catches 'n' off the back porch 'ere. I tell you, sir, a man can live mighty comfortable on mighty little, if 'ee knows 'ow, an' ain't got nobody but 'isself to please."

"Very true, Captain," said Bascom, judiciously. "Upon my word, I envy you. I never saw a man more independent and at the same time comfortable."

"No woman to humor, d'ye see," chimed in the Captain. "I takes me pipe and me ease wot I wants it."

"Exactly," said Bascom.

"An' as for the matter of children," continued the Captain, "there ain't no 'oman 'round 'ere to trample on me toes wen they're kids, or do me 'out of me money wen they're grown."

"Quite true," said Bascom. "They tell me that you're a regular capitalist, got money out at interest, and all that sort of thing."

"Well," said our host, slowly, "I hain't exactly wot you call a capitalist, but I got a little money laid by, an' every once in a while some feller comes down 'ere an' 'ceases. 'Cap'n, 'ee says, 'can you lend me a 'undred dollars?' An' I asks wot it's for; an' wot security 'ee's got, an' maybe I lends it, and maybe I don't. I'd a sight rather they'd be comin' to me than me goin' to them. Then there's the women, w'y they're comin' down 'ere all the time a-tellin' me their troubles an' askin' for advice, or maybe wantin' to borrow a little money. I generally lends it to the women—with security, of course. I'm purty sure to get it back again, an' then I likes to 'elp 'em, w'y they needs it. It beats everything w'y the Lord made women so kind o' 'elpless like. I got as much as two thousand dollars loaned to one 'oman. She's a widow wot keeps a shop up in town, fancy notions an' slob. She came to me arter her man died, in a heap o' trouble, an' I lent her a little money, an' I've added to it sense. No more notion o' business, sir, or takin' care of 'erself than a baby! Of course I got a mortgage on the place, all right; she owns the 'ouse and the stock, an' I got it covered. She's got a couple o' childer, too, wot ain't worth the powder to blow 'em up with. I go up there 'e'very once in awhile an' straighten things out for her; go over the accounts an' giva her advice. She's a mighty good cook, too, is the widow, an' the best ain't good enough fer me wen I goes a-cabin 'on 'er."

And again our nautical friend winked. "Don't you think you're a little reckless, Captain?" said Bascom, reproachfully. "The first thing you know, that widow will marry you."

"No, sir, no," said the Captain, "there's too many of 'em tried that. I was married once, d'ye see, fifteen years, lacking one month, two weeks, four days, and seven hours, astronomical time."

Soon after this, one beautiful moonlight night, Bascom and I walked down to the barge with the intention of taking a boat for a row. We found, however, that our friend was rushed with business. All the boats were out except one which was engaged by a man accompanied by two women, and this party the Captain was in the act of embarkin'. As we stood idly watching the operation the old mariner said to them, "Old on till I swab off that thwart," and passing Bascom ostensibly to get the swab, he nudged that gentleman in the ribs with his elbow, and whispered hoarsely behind the back of his hairy head, "That's the widow!"

Of course our interest in embarkation was doubled by this piece of information, and we scanned the widow as well as the occasion permitted. She was a small, middle aged woman, rather thin and angular, but, as Bascom afterwards told the Captain, "of a tidy build." We noticed that neither she nor her benefactor indulged in look or word of a confidential

character, he attended strictly to his nose, while she kept her eyes straight in front of her with a rigidity that defied the public gaze. When the Captain joined us after his labors we stood awhile watching the silvery wake of the moon on the water, into the radiance of which a boat would occasionally glide, showing feminine drapery, while little peals of laughter came pleasantly to our ears, mingled with the strumming of a guitar and snatches of song.

"The moon must be a considerable help to your business, Captain," said I.

"Yes, sir," he admitted, taking his pipe from his mouth and thrusting the glowing tobacco down with his little finger, the moon's purty glow, though the stars were better; still, the moon ain't bad. It's a powerful 'elp to the young women 'n gettin' married. W'en a young 'oman comes down 'ere an' says, 'Cap'n, w'en'll there be a moon?' I don't say nothink, but I counts on 'usin' 'er fer a regular customer inside o' a year. For d'ye see, arter they gets married, the woman don't care no more about boats and the moon, an' such 'n' as for the man, I reckon 'ee don't know an' don't care whether the moon's shinin' or not. 'Ceptin' it might be w'en 'ee 'as to get out o' 'ed at night to 'unt fer the pargoreg."

Bascom laughed at this, and then we fell smoking our pipes and enjoying the quiet of the scene. The silence was finally broken by our host. "If I was a young man," he said, puffing out a long streamer of smoke meditatively, "an' was castin' round in my mind to get wedded, I'd steer my course by the moon. I'd get into a boat. I'd fetch 'er alongside o' a boat an' keep me eye on 'er w'en she got in. Fer, d'ye mind, some women, the moment they gets nigh a boat, commences to giggle and lark, an' lay 'old o' everything in sight, 'ceptin' the right thing; an' some 'em 'flops in, fer all the world like a whale stranded on a sand bar, an' all but capsize the boat; an' some 'em 'em, an' precious few they are, steps in as light as a feather an' sits right down without any fuss or noise, so that y'd hardly know they was there. Now, if I was goin' to get wedded, I wouldn't 'ave nothink wot ever to do with the giggling kind, nor the screeching kind, nor the flopping kind; I'd just make right up to the one wot was quick an' light o' foot, an' didn't make no fuss, I would, if I was goin' to get wedded."

"I noticed," said Bascom, reflectively, "that the widow has a neat way of stepping into a boat."

At which the Captain emitted from between his teeth a curious chuckle sound which we had long ago learned was a concealed laugh.

Three weeks elapsed before we again visited the barge, and then we found a tall, lanky fellow by the name of Sam in charge of the Captain's domicile. In former days our nautical friend had sometimes employed Sam to help him in busy seasons, and frequently left him to care for the barge during his temporary absence. So we supposed that Sam was present in the capacity of hired man on this occasion. He quickly corrected our misapprehension, however, by announcing that he had "bought old Grummett out."

"Bought him out!" Bascom and I exclaimed in unison.

"Y-p," said Sam.

"Why, what's become of the Captain?" said Bascom.

"He's married," replied Sam.

"Married?" we again chorused.

"Yep," said Sam.

"N't the widow?" said Bascom, incredulously.

"Yep," said Sam. "Leastways, the widow married him. You know the old man was always rilin' again marriage. Well, when he got spliced he tried to make out to me that it was a matter of business, and he was kind of anxious to prove to me that marryin' the widow was a good speculation. He allowed that the store was going to ruin for lack of proper management, and if got in and married the widow he'd run the business to the Queen's taste, and save the money wot he'd advanced on the mortgage. But, I ain't no marine, and Sam spat contemptuously over the side.

It was about six months after the Captain's marriage that I came across a paragraph in the newspaper announcing the accidental death by drowning of Captain R. Grummett, well known in the vicinity where he had for many years kept a boat-house.

I have no doubt that this was our old friend, and I read with grieved interest, not unmixed with surprise, that the Captain had hired one of his old boats, one evening, to go fishing; later on a north-easter had sprung up, and as her husband had not returned the following morning, the wife had instituted a search that resulted in the finding of the boat bottom up in the edge of the marshes and the discovery of his hat floating a quarter of a mile away. The body had not been found, but there was no doubt, the article said, that the old mariner had met his death in the squall, and his remains had gone out with the tide.

Although Bascom and I had not seen the Captain since his marriage, we naturally were very sorry to hear of his death, and one day, being in the neighborhood, we paid a final visit to the boat-house. The place was no longer what it had been. The neat little cabin was now dirty and disordered, the bed looked as though it had not been made up for a week, the stove and cooking utensils were sadly

in need of cleaning, an old wooden shirt was thrust in the caddy sacred to the chronometer, and an empty bottle, with a candle stuck in it, stood on the compass. Outside under the awning, spitting on the once immaculate deck, sat three or four loafers, among them Sam, tilted back against the house with hat over his eyes, whittling his chair. We called him to one side and asked him if it was true about the Captain's death.

"Why, sure," said Sam, "it's in the papers, ain't it?"

"Well," said Bascom, "we were friends of the Captain, and we are mighty sorry to hear it."

"That's a fact," said Sam, with awakened interest, "you were friends, weren't you?"

"Yes," said Bascom, "and if there was anything we could have done for him, we would have done it gladly."

At this Sam eyed us for quite a little while, then he looked across the water, then he looked down and scratched the back of his head, pushing his hat over his eyes to enable him to do it more thoroughly; finally he looked at us again from under the brim, and then, to our amazement, he slowly drew the lids of his right eye together, and at the same time thrust his tongue in his left cheek.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Bascom, roughly.

"Bah!" said Sam, and again he repeated the performance.

A sudden intelligence dawned on Bascom's face. "You don't mean it's all a fake, do you?" he whispered.

"I ain't sayin'," replied Sam, relapsing into his ordinary manner. "Only, 'twixt you and me, there ain't no water enough in this here bay to drown the old man. As for the boat—"

Well, I gave it to the newspapers as I found it, but that ain't provin' 'er dead. He may have had his reasons for skippin' out, an' I may have helped him, I ain't sayin'. You see, the widow had a will of her own that the Captain hadn't counted on, with a temper to back it up; and when it come to managin' the store, the Captain wasn't in it. He was all for peace and quiet, the Captain was, and he may have concluded—mind you, I don't say he did, but he may have concluded he'd rather she'd minister on the estate, or so much of it as he couldn't salt down and get away with, than to have to live alongside o' her for the balance of his days. I ain't givin' you this for truth, you understand, I'm only sayin' it might be so. But there is one thing sure, and that is, that although the widow mayn't be much on business, she raised that mortgage a sight quicker than any man could have done it."

FIRESIDE FUN.

Bibman: "Did your watch stop when you dropped it on the floor?" Mayley: "Of course it did. Did you think it would go through?"

"Little Binks is going to marry that very tall Miss Hopkins."

"Goodness! How did he court her—with a stepladder or a telephone?"

"I don't know what's going to become of that boy of mine. He was never known to get anything right."

"Make a weather prophet of him."

Professor: "Please give an example of actions speaking louder than words."

Adlet: "When a man calls for soda water and accompanies his order with a wink, sir."

"The good die young," remarked the casual caller, apropos of any old thing.

"They may if they are chickens," said the editor, "but if they are jokes they do not."

She: "What do you think of the proposition to tax bachelors with a view to encouraging matrimony?"

He: "I think it would be much better to give a bounty with wives."

One day, at the late Dean of Ely's table, a legal gentleman was lamenting the gaps which death had recently made in his profession. "We have lost," he said solemnly, "not less than six eminent lawyers in as many months." The Dean, who was quite deaf, at once rose and repeated, graciously: "For this and all his merdes," etc.

A San Francisco young lady gave her "young man" a beautifully worked pair of slippers, and he acknowledged the present by sending her picture enclosed in a handsome frame. He wrote a note to send with it and at the same time replied angrily to an oft-repeated dun for an unpaid-for suit of clothes. He gave a boy expense to deliver the note, and, alas, giving the exploit directions to the date of each. It was a boy with a frisked face, and he discharged his errand in a manner that should give him a niche in the temple of Fame. The young lady received a note in her adored one's handwriting and flew to her room to devour its contents. She opened the missive with eager fingers and read: "I am getting tired of your everlasting attentions. The suit is about worn out already. It never amounted to much, anyway. Please go to thunder!" And the tailor was struck utterly dumb when he opened the parcel and discovered the portrait of his delinquent customer, with a note that said: "When you gaze upon my features think how much I owe you. When that unfortunate man called around that evening to receive the happy acknowledgment of his sweet heart, he was very ostentatiously pushed off the steps by the young lady's father."

A Protestant View of the Irish-Catholic Unity.

T. W. Russell M. P., in a recent speech said:

"The Catholic bishops and the laity demand equality in this as in every other matter. The opponents of these proposals deny that Trinity College is Protestant; they contend that its offices and emoluments are now open to every creed. This is true. There is nothing to hinder a properly qualified Roman Catholic from filling any position in Trinity College now filled by competition. Yet when this is said and admitted it is difficult to see how the whole history and atmosphere of that noblest of Irish institutions are distinctly Protestant. It was founded by Queen Elizabeth. Much of its revenues are derived from benefactions of Roman Catholic lands. There is a glorious old Protestant chapel within its walls, and the Protestant service is celebrated daily. The Trinity School of the (Protestant) Church of Ireland is part and parcel of the institution. Almost every fellow and nearly all the professors are Protestants, and the overwhelming majority of the students are of the same religion. I am simply stating facts; and I say that I can well understand a devout Roman Catholic layman objecting to send his boy to be educated there."

It put it to any Protestant present—if the facts were reversed—if the atmosphere

of Trinity College was as intensely Catholic as it is undoubtedly Protestant, if the fellows and professors were all Catholics—if the Catholic Trinity School instead of being at Maynooth were there, if mass was sung every day on the chapel, what would you do?

Would you send your boy there for his education? And would it be an answer to you that every office was open to Protestants? No; you would do nothing of the kind. And if this be so, why should we ask Roman Catholics to do what we would utterly refuse to do ourselves?"

Hawson: "Some men go through this world as though they were blind. I wish I could!" Binks: "Why don't you buy a wheel?"

The Absent-Minded professor: "Do you know, my dear, I was so busy remembering what you asked me to buy you that I forgot to stop and get it."

A Lark Saved. Mr. James Brown, Canon of the Diocese of the United States, was with him, and he was given up by the physicians. A neighbor advised me to try Dr. Thomas' Elix. On a string that his wife had used it for a throat trouble with the best results. Acting on his advice, I procured the medicine, and took a half bottle each day. I certainly believe it saved my life. It was with reluctance that I consented to a trial, as I was reduced to such a state that I doubted the power of any remedy to do me any good."

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