

Mary Rutherford's Understanding.

By Marion Dallas, Ottawa.

Just thirty years ago tonight me and Josh was married, and barring the money question, we couldn't have been happier. Josh was good to me, he was. (God forbid I should say anything bad about him now he's dead), but he did think women folk shouldn't handle money. "What's a husband for," he'd say to me, "if it ain't to keep you women folk from worryin' about money?" A heap he knew about women when we was worryin' cause we didn't have the handling of the money; leastwise, some of it.

Some time ago I read a piece in the paper written about "A Wife's Allowance," and I said to myself, "I wonder did the writer know my Josh?" but, goodness knows, my Josh isn't the only one 'round our corners what thought they was a savin' their women worry by not giving them a cent. There's heaps of women die awaiting and a hoping to get some money all their own for some cherished wish. Why, right on the next farm was John Livingstone. Everybody knew Livingstone, and how his wife, Eliza, had scraped and scrimped for years tryin' to get enough money to buy a carpet for the front room. She'd been having the butter and milk from a Jersey cow she'd raised, but when feed was scarce John sold her cow, unknown to her, and took her little saving to buy a new plow. The disappointment of not having that new carpet helped kill Eliza, I know it did, for she told me on her deathbed, "if I just knew that there was a new carpet on that front floor, I'd die happy." Thank goodness the wife he took soon after Eliza was gone was none of your weak women, and she soon put a new carpet down an' got new plush chairs, too.

But I must tell you how me and Josh come to have an understanding. When I married Josh I had a little bit of money of my own. So the first few years after we were married I had plenty to buy the little things I wanted, but I was working hard gathering eggs, raising chickens and making butter between times, trying to make our farm clean and cheerful likes inside and out. After my wee girlie came I could not leave her much, for she was delicate like, so Josh, of course, did all the trading. Many times when he had been to market he'd say, "Well, Mary, I had some mighty fine sales today," but never a cent would he give to me as my part of the sales. Till at last my little pile of money was all gone, and I wanted some specially pretty things for baby. I waited and kept awaiting, and I guess I'd have been waiting still, for Josh to offer me some money or ask me if I needed anything. But no, he'd never thought of such a thing as that. I suppose he was at thinking how he was saving me worry. At last I up and asked him, with trembling in my soul. How my pride rebelled, and poor Josh was unconscious of all my independent longings. "How much," said he, "do you want." I named the lowest amount possible, and without so much as a word he laid down the sum. For a long time I did without any little things I wanted.

Well, to make a long story short, years rolled by and three dear little children came to bless our home. Fortunately, our farm was a good one, and we were very comfortable. Josh was always a kind, loving husband and father. Every time he'd go to market on business or away on a visit he'd always bring us something. Once when he brought me a green plush album, and me having two already, I told him I'd rather have the money. "Why," said he, quite hurtlike, "I thought you'd like that." Someway he was blind to my longing for independence, but our children were growing.

Once when I had a little party, and the women folks was talking about "suffragettes," Josh turned and looked fondly at me, and he meant it too, and said he, "Mary and me never worry over the women's rights, do we? She has all I make; I give her all she wants." And I, fearing to tell our family secrets, said, "Indeed, Josh is a pretty good husband."

Our girl could see how things were shaping. She had the woman's instinct and felt for me. It was drawing nigh to the time when she would be starting a home of her own. One day we were all sitting down and talking about her wedding, and innocent like her father asked how she and James were getting on. Well, if you will believe me, she up and gave her pa an answer and wakened him out of his peaceful delusion. I fairly trembled. "I just tell you, this father, we will settle our money matters and right at first. I'll never be like my mother, afraid to ask for every cent I need. I have watched you and mother and I made up my mind that if any man asked me to marry him and be his partner in life, I'd say I wanted to be his partner in every way. If I help him earn his money, part of it's mine to do as I please with, and if he really loves me he will be willing. I'm going to combine business with sentiment, and we will be happier. James has promised to do that way, for his father did, and see what a happy home they have. I know you love mother, but you keep the money in the bank, and mother has missed much happiness out of her life because she couldn't be the least bit independent."

Now, I thought the roof would fall on us, but it didn't. Jessie had her say out and just went and left us. I felt mighty humbled, but poor Josh! For a long time neither of us spoke. At last Josh said, "Mary," and his voice had a far away sound, "did Jessie speak the truth? Have you been breaking your heart all these years and me thinking I was saving you care and worry?" I foolishly-like answered, "O Josh, it isn't so bad as she says." But I saw that he was feeling real bad, and I waited.

He said no more, but just came over and kissed me, saying in his loveliest and humblest tones, "I've been a brute, Mary. I see it all now, but thank God I've my eyes opened before it's too late. You'll never be humbled in our children's eyes again."

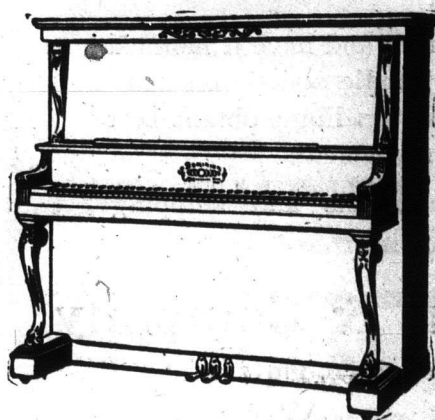
From that day until the day he died, every week he'd bring me the price of all my sales, and if there was no trip to market, he'd just put down what he thought was the right sum sheepishly on my stand and I always understood and was happy.

Josh has been dead for five long years. If we had only known one another well enough when we were first married, to plan our money matters, what a home we would have had, for Josh loved me. And, well, did I love Josh? I just guess I did, money or no money.

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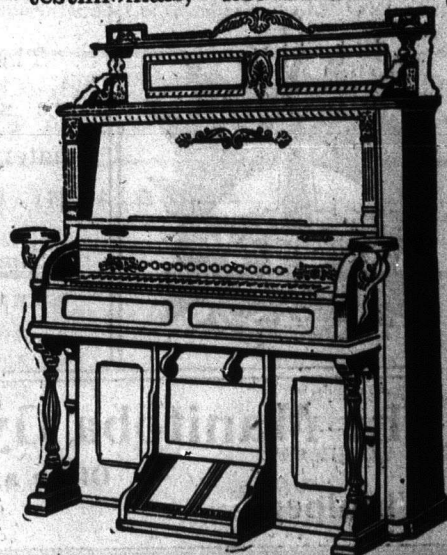
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