THE TWO OLD BACHELORS.

Two old bachelors were living in one house,
One caught a muffin, the other caught a mouse,
Said he who caught the muffin to him who caught the mouse;
"This happens just in time, for we've nothing in the house,
Save a tiny piece of lemon, and a teaspoonful of honey;
And what to do for dinner—since we haven't any money;
And what can we expect, if we haven't any dinner,
But to loose our teeth and eyelashes and keep on growing thinner?"

Said the one who caught the mouse to him who caught the muffin;
"We might cook the little mouse if we only had some stuffin';
If we had sage and onion we could do extremely well,
But how to get that stuffin' it is difficult to tell."

These two bachelors ran quickly to the town,
And asked for sage and onions, as they wandered up and down.
They borrowed two large onions, but no sage was to be found.
In the shops or in the market, or in all the gardens round.

But some one said: "A hill there is a little to the north,
And to its perpendicular top a narrow way leads forth,
And there among the rugged rocks abides an ancient sage,
An earnest man who reads all day a most perplexing page.
Climb up and seize him by the toes; all studious he sits,
And pull him down and chop him into endless little bits:
Then mix him with your onion, cut up likewise into scraps,
When your stuffin' will be ready, and very good—perhaps."

Those two old bachelors, without any loss of time,
The nearly perpendicular crags at once began to climb,
And at the top among the rocks, all seated in a nook,
They saw that Sage a-reading of a most enormous book.

"You earnest Sage," aloud they cried, "your book you've read enough in,
We wish to chop you into bits to make you into stuffin'"
But that old Sage looked calmly up and with his awful book
At these two bachelors' bald heads a sudden aim he took:
And over crag and precipice they rolled promiscuous down,
At once they rolled and never stopped, in lane or field or town,
And when they reached their house they found (besides their want of stuffin').
The mouse had fled and previously had eaten up the muffin.
They left their home in silence, by the once convivial door.
And from that hour those bachelors were never heard of more.

THE POT OF GOLD.

Elder Boyd, though a very good man in the main, and looked up to with respect by all the inhabitants of the village of Oldville, was rumored to have, in Yankee parliance, a pretty sharp look-out for the main chance, a peculiarity from which elders are not always exempt.

In worldly matters he was decidedly well-to-do, having inherited a fine farm from his father, which was growing yearly more and more valuable. It might be supposed that under these circumstances the elder, who was fully able to do so, would have found a helpmate to share his house and name. But the elder was wary. Matrimony was to him, in some measure, a matter of money, and it was his firm resolve not to marry unless he could thereby enhance his worldly prosperity. Unhappily, the little village of Oldville and the towns in the immediate vicinity contained few who were qualified in the important particular, and of those there were none probably with whom the elder's suit would have prospered. So it happened that year after year passed away, until Elder Boyd was in the prime of life—forty five, or thereabouts—and still unmarried, and likely to remain so. But in all human calculations of this kind, they reckon ill who leave widows out.

Elder Boyd's nearest neighbor was a widow.

The Widow Hayes, who had passed through matrimonial experience, was some four years younger than Elder Boyd. She was still a buxom, comely woman, as widows are apt to be.

Unfortunately the late Mr. Hayes had not been able to leave her sufficient to make her independent of the world. All that she possessed was the small, old-fashioned house in which she lived, and a small amount of money, which was insufficient to support her and a little son of six, to be enumerated in the schedule of her property, though hardly to be classed as "productive" of anything but mischief.

The widow was therefore obliged to take care of three boarders to eke out her scanty income, which, of course, imposed upon her considerable labor and anxiety.

Is it surprising that under these circumstances she should now and then have bethought herself of a second marriage as a method of bettering her condition? Or again, need we esteem it a special wonder if, in her reflections upon this point, she should have cast her eyes upon her next neighbor, Elder Boyd? The elder, as we have already said, was in flourishing circumstances. He would be able to maintain a wife in great comfort, and being one of the chief personages in the village, could accord her a prominent social position. He was not especially handsome, or calculated to make a profound impression upon the female heart; this was true, but he was of a good disposition, kind-hearted, and no doubt would make a very good sort of a husband. Widows are, I take it (if any shall do me the honor to read this story, I trust they will forgive the remark), less disposed to weigh sentiment in a second alliance than a first, and so, in the widow's point of view, Elder Boyd was a very desirable match.

Some sagacious person, however, has observed that it takes two to make a match, a fact to be seriously considered; for in the present case it was exceedingly doubtful whether the worthy elder, even if he had known the favorable opinion of his next neighbor, would have been inclined to propose changing her name to Boyd, unless, indeed, a suitable motive was brought to bear upon him. Here was a chance for a little managing, wherein widows are said, as a general thing, to be expert.

One evening, after a day of fatiguing labor, Widow Hayes sat at the fire in the sitting-room, with her feet resting on the fender.

"If ever I am situated so as not to have to work so hard," she murmured, "I shall be happy. It's a hard life, keeping boarders. If I was only as well off as Elder Boyd."

Still the widow kept up her thinking, and by and by her face brightened. She had an idea which she resolved to put into execution at the earliest possible moment. What it was the reader will discover in the sequel.

"Freddie," said she to her son the next morning, "I want you to stop at Elder Boyd's when you go to school and ask him if he will call on me in the course of the morning or afternoon, just as he finds it most convenient."

Elder Boyd was a little surprised at this summons. However, about eleven o'clock he called in. The widow had got on the dinner, and had leisure to sit down. She appeared a little embarrassed.

"Freddie told me you would like to see me," he commenced.

"Yes, elder, I should. But I am very much afraid you will think strange at least of what I have to say to you."

The elder promised very politely not to be surprised, though at the same time his curiosity was visibly excited.

"Suppose," said the widow, casting down her eyes—"mind, I was only supposing a case—suppose a person should find a pot of gold pieces in their cellar, would the law have a right to touch it, or would it belong to them?" The elder pricked up his ears.

"A pot of gold pieces, widow? Why, unquestionably, the law would have nothing to do with it."

"And the one who formerly owned the house couldn't come forward and claim it, could he, elder?"

"No, madam; unquestionably not. When the house was disposed of, everything went with it, as a matter of course."

"I am glad to hear it, elder. You won't think strange of the question, but it happened to occur in my mind, and I thought I would like to have it satisfied."

"Certainly, widow, certainly," said the elder, abstractedly.

"And, elder, as you're here, I hope you will stop to dinner with us. It will be ready punctually at twelve."

"Well, no," said the elder, rising, "I'm obliged to ye; but they'll be expecting me at home."

"At any rate, elder," said the widow, taking a piece of mince pie fresh from the oven, "you won't object to taking a piece of mince pie. You must know that I rather pride myself on my mince pies."

The warm pie sent forth such a delicious odor that the elder was sorely tempted, and, after saying, "Well, really," with the intention of refusing, he finished by saying, "On the whole, I guess I will, as it looks so nice."

The widow was really a good cook, and the elder ate with much gusto the generous piece which the widow cut for him, and after a little chatting upon unimportant subjects, withdrew in some mental perplexity.

Was it possible, thought he, the widow could really have found a pot of gold in her cellar? She did not say so, to be sure, but why should she have shown so much anxiety to know as to the proprietorship of the treasure thus found, if she had not happened upon some? To be sure, so far as his knowledge extended, there was no one who would be likely to lay up such an amount of gold; but the house was 150 years old, at the very least, and had had many occupants of which he knew nothing. It might be, after all. The widow's earnest desire to have him think it was only curiosity, likewise gave additional probability to the supposition. "I will wait and watch," thought the elder.

It so happened that Elder Boyd was one of the directors of a savings institution situated in the next town, and accordingly used to ride over there once or twice a month to attend meetings of the board.

On the next occasion of this kind the Widow Hayes sent over to know if he would carry her with him, as she had a little business to attend to there. The request was readily accorded. Arriving at the village, Mrs. Hayes desired to be set down at the bank building.

"Ha, ha!" thought the elder, "that means something."

He said nothing, however, but determined to come back and find out, as he could readily from the cashier, what business she had with the bank. The widow tripped into the office pretending to look very nonchalant.

"Can you give me small bills for a ten dollar gold piece?" she asked.

"With pleasure," was the reply.

"By the way," she said, "the bank is in a very flourishing condition, is it not?"

"None in the state on a better footing," was the prompt response.

"You receive deposits, do you not?"

"Yes, madam; we receive them every day."

"Do you receive as high as—as ten thousand dollars?"

"No," said the cashier, with some surprise, "or, rather, we do not allow interest on so large a sum. One thousand dollars is our limit. Did you know of any one who—"

"It is of no consequence," said the widow, hurriedly; "I only asked for curiosity. By the way, did you say how much interest you allowed on such deposits as come within your limit?"

"Five per cent., madam."

"Thank you. I only asked for curiosity. What a beautiful morning it is," and the widow tripped lightly out.

Shortly after the elder entered.

"How's business, Mr. Cashier?" he inquired.

"About as usual."

"Had many deposits lately?"

"None of any magnitude."

"I brought over a woman this morning who seemed to have business with you."

"The Widow Hayes?"

"Yes."

"Do you know," asked the cashier, "whether she had any money left her lately?"

"None that I know of," said the elder, pricking up his ears. "Why, did she deposit any?"

"No; but she inquired whether we received deposits as high as $10,000."

"Indeed!" ejaculated the elder. "Is that all she came for?" he inquired, a moment afterward.

"No, she exchanged a gold piece for bills."

"Ha!" pondered the elder, reflectively, "Did she give any reason for her inquiries?"

"No, she said she only asked for curiosity."

The elder left the bank in deep thought. He came to the conclusion that this curiosity only veiled a deeper motive. He now no longer entertained a doubt that the widow had found a pot of gold in her cellar, and appearances seemed to indicate that its probable value was at least equal to $10,000. The gold piece which she had exchanged at the bank appeared to confirm this theory.

"I rather think," said the elder to himself, complacently, "I can see into a millstone about as far as most people." A statement, the literal truth of which I defy any one to question, though as to the prime fact of people being able to see into a millstone at all doubts have now and then thrust themselves upon my mind.

The next Sunday the Widow Hayes appeared at church in a new and stylish bonnet, which led to some such remarks as these:

"How much vanity some people have, to be sure!"

"How a woman that has to keep boarders for a living can afford to dash out in such a bonnet is more than I can tell. I should think she was old enough to know better."

This last remark was made by a young lady just six months younger than the widow, and whose attempts to catch a second husband had hitherto proved utterly unavailing.

"I suppose," continued the same young lady, "she is trying to catch a first husband with her finery. Before I'd condescend to such means, I'd—I'd drown myself."

In this last amiable speech the young lady had unwittingly hit upon the true motive. The widow was intent upon catching Elder Boyd, and she indulged in a costly bonnet, not because she supposed the elder would be caught with finery, but because this would strengthen in his mind the idea that she had stumbled upon hidden wealth. The widow calculated shrewdly, and the display had the effect she anticipated. Monday afternoon, the elder found an errand that called him over to the widow's. It chanced to be just about tea-time. He was importuned to stay to tea, and, somewhat to his own surprise, actually did.

The politic widow, who knew the elder's weak point, brought one of her best mince pies, a piece of which her guest partook of with zest.

"You'll take another piece, I know," said she, persuasively.

"Really, I am ashamed," said the elder; but he passed his plate. "The fact is," he said apologetically, "your pies are so nice I don't know when to stop."

"Do you call those nice?" said the widow, modestly. "I call them common. I can make good mince pies when I set out to, but this time I didn't have as good luck as usual."

"I shouldn't want any better," said the elder, emphatically.

"Then I hope, if you like them, you will drop in to tea often. We ought to be more neighborly, Elder Boyd."

Elder Boyd assented, and he meant what he said. The fact is, the elder began to think that the widow was a very charming woman. She was very comely and then she was such an excellent cook. Besides, he had no doubt in his own mind that she was worth a considerable sum of money. What objection could there be to her becoming Mrs. Boyd? He brought this question before her one evening. The widow blushed, professing to be greatly surprised. In fact, she had never thought of such a thing in her life; but, on the whole, she had always thought highly of the elder, and, to cut the matter short, she accepted him. A month afterward she was installed as mistress of the elder's large house, somewhat to the surprise of the village people, who could not conceive how she had brought him over. Some weeks after the ceremony, the elder ventured to inquire about the pot of gold which she had found in the cellar.

"Pot of gold!" she exclaimed, in surprise; "I know of none."

"But," said the elder, disconcerted, "you asked me about whether the law could claim it."

"Oh, Lor', elder, I only asked for curiosity."

"And was that the reason you made inquiries at the bank?"

"Certainly! What else could it be?"

The elder went out to the barn and for half an hour sat in silent meditation. At the end of that time he ejaculated, as a closing consideration:

"After all, she makes good mince pies."

It gives me pleasure to state that the union between the elder and the widow proved a very happy one, although to the end of his life he could never make up his mind about the "Pot of Gold."

Women Who Go Armed.

"A man who is posted in this rapid age of ours," said a prominent member of the New York detective department the other day, "knows that women have undergone a radical change in their system of life."

"What do you mean?"

"Simply that women are more self-reliant than they were in the days of our grandmothers. This woman's rights movement has made them so. When a woman is insulted now, in nine cases out of ten, she defends herself, and, if the fellow doesn't look out he's apt to get a hole blown through him."

"Is it common for women to carry pistols?"

"You may think I am exaggerating, but there are more women who go armed than men. Hundreds of cases come to the notice of the police department where women get away with roughs and chase burglars out of their houses that the people never hear of. Now, when a man hears anything in the house at night, he throws up the window and yells for the police, but the woman, if she's a game one, slips her hand under the pillow and fetches out a 'pop.' If the intruder is smart he makes tracks, for a woman with a pistol is the gamest thing on earth."

"What kind of pistol do they carry?"

"All kinds; but the nickel-plated Smith & Wesson is the most popular among them. A woman never fires her weapon at short range. She rushes close to the person she wants to shoot, and thrusts the barrel right into his clothes. She never takes the chance of missing her aim. In every case brought to the notice of the department where a man has been shot by a woman the clothing of the victim has been burned. You'd hardly think it, but every other woman who walks Broadway and Fifth avenue, even in the most fashionable thoroughfares, has a pistol concealed about her."

"Where does she carry it?"

"In the bosom of her dress invariably. This gives her a decided advantage over a man, for she can whip out her pistol before he can divine her motive. A gay old beau tried to kiss a young, sweet-faced girl at the corner of University place and Fourteenth street. It was late at night and the girl was returning from the store where she was employed as a saleslady. He had been annoying the girl for some time. Finding it was impossible to resist his gross importunities without creating a scene, 'she said to him, 'I will give you a kiss on one condition.' 'Name it,' he exclaimed rapturously. 'Meet me here at this hour to-morrow,' said she. Prompt to the minute he was at his post the following night. The girl came a moment later, and the old codger hastened to embrace. She let him get his arm around her waist, and then drawing a tiny pistol from her bosom, she shot the venerable lover in the hip. Being well known in the clubs, the man refused to make known the identity of his fair assailant, and as he recovered, the matter was dropped."

"Do actresses carry revolvers."

"Many of them do. Clara Morris is proficient in the use of the pistol, and is said to always have one within reach. Ada Dyas is also a firs-trate shot and even had occasion to employ her skill in Madison Park. She had been pursued a considerable distance by several roughs. The hour was late and no policeman was in sight. Having warned the fellows in vain to desist from their persecutions, she drew a revolver and sent a bullet close enough to the head of the foremost to make his hair rise. The cowards took to their heels, and Miss Dyas has never been troubled since. Suppose you heard of Mary Anderson's adventure?"

"No."

"The last time she was in Leavenworth, Kan., she was pestered by the attentions of a lot of military officers stationed at the fort. The fellows have been for years in the habit of visiting the theater, going behind the scenes in squads, and making violent overtures to the women in the cast of the piece. They lead idle lives, draw big pay from the government, and as they spend all their money in the city of Leavenworth, they practically run the town. When Miss Anderson was out that way last year, she was beseiged between the acts. At first she treated the bold soldiers with digniged contempt, but when one of them ventured to poke his nose into her dressing room, she picked up her revolver and blazed away. The result was the ignominous flight of the United States army, and the peaceful performance of the remainder of the play."

The Secret of a Certain Popularity.

"Flossie and I met the lovely Mrs. Z. the other day. We've been just dying to know her for ages, for we dote on celebrities, both of us. I never know what to say to bright people. We were both a little stunned at first, and we waited for her wonderful learning to pour from her lips. But it didn't come. She just talked along as comfortably as any one of us girls, and when the time came to say good-bye I could have kissed her, only I couldn't quite dare."

"Well, girls," papa said, "what do you think of her?"

"We went into perfect raptures, but we didn't know why. She was just as simple as she could be, and no one in the world would ever have suspected that she knew more than common mortals."

"Did she happen to mention, in the course of conversation," asked papa, "that you had a very nice set of teeth, Fulana, and that the curve of Flossie's eyebrow would justify a man in writing a sonnet on it, or words to that effect?"

"Why, yes, papa; but how did you know it?"

"Simply, my dear, because I know the best points in both of you, and that Mrs. Z. has a magical knowledge of every one's small vanities. She is a sweet, bright woman, but if you wish to know the entire secret of her wonderful popularity, it is delicately flavored, delicately conveyed taffy."

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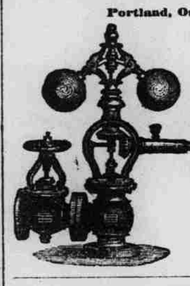

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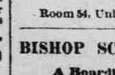

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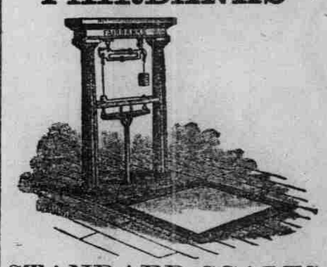

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