

The Daily Astorian.

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BILL AND THE WIDOW.

"Wife," said Ed. Wilder, one morning, "wouldn't it be a good joke to get bachelor Bill Smiley to take Widow Watson to the show next week?"

"You can't do it Ed; he won't ask her, he's so awfully shy. Why, he came by here the other morning when I was hanging out some clothes, and looked over the fence and spoke; but when I shook out a night-gown he blushed like a girl and went away."

"I think I can manage it," said Ed, "but I'll have to lie just a little."

So saying Ed started, and while he is crossing the field we will take a glance at Bill Smiley. He was rather a good-looking fellow, though his hair and whiskers showed some gray. He wore a set of artificial teeth. Every one said he was a good soul, and so he was. He had as good a hundred-acre farm as any in Norwich, with a new house and everything comfortable; and, if he wanted a wife, many a girl would have jumped at the chance. But Bill was so bashful—always was; and when Susan Berrybottle, whom he was so sweet on, though he never said "boo" to her, got married to old Watson, he just drew in his head like a mud-turtle into its shell, and there was no getting him out again. But here comes Ed Wilbur.

"Good morning, Mr. Smiley." "Good morning, Mr. Wilbur, what's the news over your way?" "Oh, nothing particular that I know of," said Ed, "only the show that everybody is talking about and everybody and his girl are going to. I was over to old Sackrider's last night, and I see his son Gus has got a new buggy, and was scrubbing up his harness, and he's got that white-faced colt of his as slick as a seal. I understand he thinks of taking the Widow Watson to the show. Susan is a nice little woman and deserves a better man than that young pup of a fellow, though I would not blame her much, either, if she takes him, for she must be dreadful lonesome; and then she has to let her farm out on shares, and it isn't half worked, and no one else seems to have the spunk to speak to her. By jingo! if I were a single man I'd show a trick or two."

So saying, Ed borrowed some bags and started around the corner of the barn, where he had left Bill sweeping, and put his ear to a knot-hole and listened, knowing that Bill had a habit of talking to himself when anything worried him.

"Confound that young Sackrider!" said Bill. "What business has he there, I'd like to know? Got a new buggy, has he? Well, so have I, and a new harness, too; and his horse can't get in sight of mine, and I declare I've half a mind to—yes, I'll go this very night and ask her to go to the show with me. I'll show Ed Wilbur that I ain't such a calf as he thinks I am, if I did let old Watson get the start of me in the first place."

Ed could scarcely help laughing outright, but he hastily hitched the bags on his shoulder, and, with a low chuckle at his success, started for home to tell the news to Nellie; and about five o'clock that evening they saw Bill go by with his horse and buggy on his way to the widow's.

He jogged along quietly until, at a distance of about a mile from her house, he came to a bridge over a creek, and it so happened that, just as he reached the middle of the bridge, he gave a tremendous sneeze and blew his teeth out of his mouth and clear over the dashboard, and, striking on the planks, they rolled over the side of the bridge and dropped about four feet of water.

Words cannot do justice to the rage of poor Bill, or paint the expression of his face as he sat there, completely dumb-founded at this startling piece of ill-luck. After a while he stepped out of his buggy,

and, getting down on his hands and knees, looked into the water. "Yes, there they were at the bottom," with a crowd of little fishes rubbing their noses against them, and Bill wished to goodness his nose was as close for one second. Well he must try and get them somehow. He had no notion of spoiling his good clothes by wading in with them on; and besides if he did that, he could not go to the widow's that night; so he took a glance up and down the road to see that no one was in sight, and then quickly undressed himself, laying his clothes in the buggy to keep them clean. Then he ran around to the bank and waded in the almost ice cold water, but his teeth did not chatter in his head—he only wished they could.

Quietly he waded along so as not to stir up the mud, and when he reached the right spot he dived under the water and came up with his teeth in his hand and replaced them in his mouth. But hark! what noise is that? A wagon and a little dog barking with all his might, and his horse is starting.

"Who! who! stop, you brute, stop!" But stop he would not, but went off at a spanking pace, with the unfortunate Bill after him, and the little dog yelping after Bill. Bill was certainly in capital running costume, but though he strained every nerve, he could not touch the buggy or reach the lines that were dragging on the ground.

After a while his plug hat bounced off the seat and the hind wheel went over it, making it as flat as a pancake. Bill snatched it up as he ran, and jamming his fist into it, stuck it, all crumpled and dusty on his head. And now he saw the widow's house on the hill, and what, oh! what will he do! Then his coat fell out; he slapped it on, and then making a desperate spurt, he clutched the back of the seat and scrambled in. Pulling the buffalo robe over his legs, he stuffed the other things beneath.

Now the horse happened to be one that got from Squire More, who got it from the widow, and the horse took it into his head to stop at her gate, which Bill had no power to prevent, as he had not possession of the reins, besides he was too busy buttoning his coat to the chin to think of doing much else.

The widow heard the rattle of the wheels and looked out, and seeing that it was Smiley, and that he did not offer to get out, she went to the gate to see what he wanted, and there she stood chatting, with her white arms on top of the gate and her face right towards him, while the cold chills ran down his shirtless back clear to his bare feet beneath the buffalo robe, and the water from his hair and the dust from his hat combined to make some nice little streams of mud that came tickling down his nose. She asked him to come in. No, he was in a hurry he said. He looked down the road behind him and saw a white-faced horse coming, and at once surmised that it was that of Gus Sackrider. He resolved to do or die, and hurriedly told his errand. The widow would be delighted to go; of course she would. But would he not come in? No, he was in a hurry, he said; he had to go to Mr. Green's residence.

"Oh," said the widow, "you are going to Green's, are you? Why, I was just going there myself. Wait a moment while I get my bonnet and shall, and I'll ride with you."

"Thunder and lightning!" said Bill to himself, "what a scrape!" Just then a light wagon, drawn by the white-faced horse, driven by a boy came along and stopped beside him.

The boy held a pair of boots in one hand and a pair of socks in the other, and just as the widow reached the gate again he said: "Here's your boots and socks, Mr. Smiley, that you left on the

bridge when you went swimming." "You're mistaken; they're not mine," said Bill. "Why, ain't you the man that had the race after the horse?" said the boy. "No sir, I am not. You had better go on about your business."

Bill sighed at the loss of his good Sunday boots, and, turning to the widow, said: "Just pick up the reins, will you, please?" The widow complied; then he pulled one corner of the robe cautiously down and she got in, "What a lovely evening!" said she, "and so warm I don't think we need the robe over us, do we?" "Oh, my," said Bill, earnestly, "you will find it chilly riding. I wouldn't have you catch cold for the world."

She contented herself with sticking one of her little feet out, with a long silk necktie over the end of it. "What is that, Mr. Smiley? a necktie?" "Yes," said he; "I bought it the other day, and must have left it in the buggy."

"But," said she, "it was so careless." And, stooping down, she made a motion to stuff it between them.

Bill felt her hand going down, and, making a dive after it, clutched it in his hand and held it hard and fast. They went on in this way quite a distance, he holding her soft little hand in his, until, as they were going down a small hill, one of the traces became unwhite and they had to stop.

"Oh, murder!" exclaimed Bill, "what next?" "What is the matter, Mr. Smiley?" said the widow, with a start that nearly jerked the robe off his knees. "Oh, my! One of the traces is off," he said.

"Well, why don't you get off and put it on?" "I can't," said Bill. "I've got—that is, I haven't got—oh, dear, I'm sick!"

"Why, Willie," said she, tenderly, "what is the matter? Do tell me." She thought he was going to faint, so she got out her smelling bottle with her left hand and, pulling the stopper out with her teeth, put it to his nose.

Bill was just taking in a breath for a mighty sigh, and the pungent odor made him throw back his head so far that he lost his balance and fell out of the low-backed buggy. The little woman gave a scream as his bare feet flew past her head, and, covering her face with her hands, gave way to tears or smiles—it is hard to tell just which.

Bill was right side up in a moment, and was leaning over the back of the seat humbly apologizing and explaining when Ed Wilbur, with his wife and baby, drove up behind him and stopped.

Poor Bill felt that he would rather be shot than have Ed Wilbur catch him in such a scrape; but there was no help for it now, so he called Ed to him and whispered in his ear the whole story. Ed was like to burst with suppressed laughter, but he beckoned to his wife to draw up, and, after saying something to her, removed the widow from Bill's buggy to his own, and the two women went on, leaving the men.

Bill lost no time in arranging his toilet as well as he could, and then, after long persuasion, Ed got him to go home with him; and hunting up slippers and socks, and getting him washed and combed, had him quite presentable when the ladies arrived.

I need not tell how the story was all wormed out of bashful Bill, and how they all laughed as they sat around the tea-table that night; but will conclude by saying that they went to the show together, and Bill has no fear of Gus Sackrider now.

An attractive, youthful appearance secured by using Parker's Hair Balsam to all who are getting gray.

Postal Matters.

The following order has been issued by Postmaster-General Gresham, and takes effect from July 1st: "Whenever any letter prepaid at less than one full rate of postage, or any parcel of third or fourth-class matter not fully prepaid, and being otherwise mailable, is deposited in a postoffice of the first, second or third-class and consigned to any other post office in the United States, it shall be the duty of the postmaster to send to the address an official postal card, containing a notice of the detention and a request to remit the proper amount of postage, to entitle the letter or parcel to be forwarded to its destination. This provision applies only to matter which does not bear the card or address of the sender. Such card matter will be returned immediately to the party mailing it, as prescribed in the existing regulations."

The New York Sun says that every lady in the land should know how to swim. It might be just as well first to have all the men learn how to swim, and they could have the fun of teaching the women at the seashore in summer.

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