

Bowser Experiments

In Order to Carry Out a New Fad He Goes Back on a Boiled Dinner and Hears Spirit Voices, but Later Sees His Mistake.

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"I HOPE you are real hungry this evening," said Mrs. Bowser, as Mr. Bowser came up from the office at his usual hour the other evening.

"Why?" he naturally queried. "Because I have got what you like best—a boiled dinner. I went over and picked out the corned beef myself."

"That was kind of you, but no boiled dinner for me tonight. All I want is a cup of tea and a piece of toast."

"Anything the matter with you?" "Not at all."

"I thought you'd like this better than any dinner I could get," continued Mrs. Bowser, after they were seated at the table.

"The dinner is all right, my dear woman," he answered, with a wave of his hand, "but I am going to make a little change in my diet. Do you know, Mrs. Bowser, that we have been living almost like two hogs? That is, we have been stuffing and gorging and paying no attention to the ethereal part. We have become too grossly fat to appreciate a glorious sunset, a beautiful sky, the songs of birds, the spirit of music."

"And now you propose to become so grossly lean that people can hear your bones grind as you walk," she remarked.

"No, ma'am, I don't. I propose to eat enough to sustain life and enable me to do my work, but as for stuffing, it shall cease. I have had—"

"What?" "Never mind. When you have gorged yourself to repletion come up to the sitting room and we will talk further. That's it—heap up your plate with the beef and potatoes and turnips, and don't forget the cabbage and carrots and parsnips!"

Mrs. Bowser made no reply, and after he had nibbled at his toast and sipped at his tea he shoved back and left the table.

Mrs. Bowser realized that there was a new fad in town, and she was busy thinking of how it should be handled. When she went up to the sitting room at last she found Mr. Bowser seated with his fingers locked together, his eyes fastened on the ceiling and what he no doubt thought was a "heavenly look" on his face. He did not seem aware of her presence, and after a moment or two she queried:

"Well, what is it?" "S-s-s-h!" he whispered.

"What shall I s-s-s-h about? What has been putting a new fad into your head today?"

"Woman," he exclaimed as his eyes came off the ceiling and his heavenly look faded, "have you no soul—no appreciation of the hidden mysteries lying between life and death? Don't you know, don't you realize that it shocks me to have you come up here, full to the chin with cabbage and corned beef, and break in upon my thoughts?"

"Have you been talking with a spiritualist or some one of that sort today?" she firmly demanded.

"There—there was a gentleman in the office."

"I thought so. And he was ethereal, wasn't he? He could sit down with a chessy cat grin on his face and talk with spirits? The more empty his stomach was the more spirits he could see? And you are idiot enough to go into the same business!"

"Don't talk that way to me—don't dare to do it!" he exclaimed. "Even as you came into the room, loaded up with fodder intended for an elephant instead of a woman, I was hearing the whispers of spirits. They fled at your approach."

"Well, I'll sit over on the lounge and hold the cat, and you can call 'em back. Give them my humble apologies for disturbing the meeting."

Mr. Bowser's dignity had suffered and it took him four or five minutes to get over it and resume his former attitude. The cat wanted to meow, but Mrs. Bowser choked her off, and for three long minutes silence reigned. Then a faint humming was heard in the air, and Mr. Bowser turned and whispered:

"Don't move a finger! Don't utter a word! A spirit is at hand and is going to say something."

The something was said a few seconds later, but it didn't seem to come from a spirit, and was not exactly spirit talk. It sounded more like the voice of a hoodlum in the alley, and what he said was:

"Say, Joe, hain't this the shanty here that cranky old Bowser lives?" "Well, the spirit has spoken," observed Mrs. Bowser, as the cat jumped down and bristled up.

"It has, it has!" shouted Mr. Bowser as he got up to walk to and fro. "I was a fool to think I could summon any other kind of spirit into a room where sits a woman who has eaten five pounds of boiled dinner! By John, but I might as well have been in a butcher shop surrounded by the carcasses of freshly killed hogs!"

"If you'll try again, I'll leave the room entirely. If you really want spirits to talk with you, I don't want to do anything to hinder. That boiled dinner was awfully good, but if spirits don't like corned beef and cabbage I'm not going to push them forward. Now, take your time and see what there is in it."

Mrs. Bowser went into the parlor, but not to sit down and wait for "creeps" to come. On the contrary, she found a peephole between the portieres and watched Mr. Bowser, and the cat sought safety under the lounge. It was ten minutes before the ethereal spirit raiser could get the flavor of that corned beef out of his nostrils and settle down to business again, and he had to hang to that heavenly look a long quarter of an hour before the spirit would show up again. There were two this time. At first, judging by the beautiful smile on his face, Mrs. Bowser took them for the spirits of innocent twin babies who had died at an early age of the measles. She was wrong, however. The basement bell gave tongue, and as the cook opened the door a hoarse, harsh voice came floating up the basement stairs:

"Say, now, gal, can't ye hand a poor man out sunthin' decent to eat?" And a second hoarse, harsh voice added:

"It's an old villain ye work for, and I'd like to smash his head for him!"

Mr. Bowser sprang up and went clattering down the basement stairs, and bareheaded as he was, he chased the pair half a block. When he returned to the house it was to find Mrs. Bowser reading a book and the cat purring away with her eyes closed.

"Well, your attempts to commune with spirits haven't been very successful tonight," finally observed Mrs. Bowser.

"And why haven't they?" he indignantly demanded. "They haven't because spirits and barrels of pork don't go together. If you had kept out of it—"

"But I did." "If that infernal old cat—"

"But the cat couldn't have had anything to do with it. I have always heard that spirits were attracted to cats. Give it up, Mr. Bowser, give it up."

"Never! Never in this world!" he replied as he banged his fist down on the mantel.

"You had better. You are too fat and stout and broad across the back to call up spirits, unless it is the spirit of some old pirate."

"What! What! You not only spoil my experiments for the evening, but make fun of and insult me! Woman, I warn you that you are pursuing a dangerous policy. Don't drive me to the dead line. I have set out to get rid of this grossness of body and spirit—to render myself more fit to appreciate the beautiful and the spirituelle, and I'll see it to the end or perish, no matter what you say."

"Well, I'll go upstairs now," she soothingly replied, "and you can come when you get ready. I have nothing more to say about it and I shall be glad to hear that your experiments are a success."

She went up to her room and sat down and read for half an hour. Then she tiptoed downstairs to find the sitting room vacant. She continued her journey down to the dining room and peeped in to find Mr. Bowser at the table. He had brought out that boiled dinner and was devouring it with a grand appetite and saying to himself between times:

"Durn my hide, but what an ass I was to let this thing slide to look for spirits!" M. QUAD.

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ELISHA MARK, E. D. HAND, Bailiff, Clerk. Fenelon Falls, Aug. 17th, 1904.

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