

THE "RESTAURAW" WIDOW

(Copyright, by Joseph B. Bowles.)

"Which I've told you," observed the Old Cattleman, puffing at his cob-pipe—"which I've already told you how Missis Rucker goes on surroundin' old Rucker with connoobial joy to such a degree that, one mornin' when her wifely back is turned, he ups an' stampeedes off into the hills, an' takes refutch with the Apaches. But I never relates how he gets aroused to his dooty an' returns. That mir'cle comes to pass in this wise."

Following a reminiscent, smoke-filled pause, the old gentleman continued:

"When Rucker is guilty of this yere desertion, Wolfville says nothin' an' does nothin'. It is no part of Wolfville's connoobial responsib'ility, as it sees the same, to go pirotin' off on the trail of Rucker, with a purpose of draggin' him back that-way to his domestic happiness. His elopement is wholly a private play, an' one wharin we ain't entitled to ask for kyards."

"On the imme'git heels of Rucker's plunge into savagery, Missis Rucker never aloods to him—never lets on she so much as notices his absence. She continoos to deal her game at the O. K. Restauraw unmoved; she fries our daily saltchons an' compiles our daily flap-jacks—six to the stack—an' neither bats an eye nor wags a y'er concernin' that vanished husband."

"Nacherally, thar ain't no one so prodded of a morbid curiosity as to go askin' Missis Rucker. With her view as to what's comin' to her as a lady, an' her bein' allers in the kitchen, surrounded by such weepions as flatirons an' griddles an' stove-lifters, any such impolite break might result disastrously. Old Man Enright puts it right, an' his views gains endorsement by Doc Peets, an' among the best intellects of the camp."

"To go pesterin' around Missis Rucker," says he, "in her bereavements, would be ongantlemanly to the verge of bein' rash, an' the gent don't live in Wolfville who's that foolish or oncooth."

"If mem'ry is sittin' squar'ly in the saddle, I reckon it's mebbey a year before Missis Rucker mentions her loss. It's one time when we-all shows up for chuck, and finds her in a dress as black as a spade flush."

"The same bein' mournin'," she explains, in answer to a remark by Doc Peets complimentin' her looks—which Peets was the gentlest sharp, an' the best educated, that ever shows up in Arizona. I'm mournin' for my departed he'pmeet. I hears about it in Tucson. Pore Rucker is deceased; an' of course I dons black, as markin' his cassin' in."

"Yere Missis Rucker" snuffles a little, an' gouges into one corner of her eye with her handkerchief, like she's roundin' up a tear; after which, she sort of runs a calc'latin' glance over us gents, then an' that assembled, like she's sizin' us up as to our domestic p'int."

"Thar's a heap of silence follows that look. Not bein' gifted none as a mind reader, I can't say how it affects the balance of the outfit; but speakin' for myse'f, a chill like ice creeps up an' down my back. Also, I observes an apprehensive look on the faces of Enright an' Boggs, as though they smells perils. As to Texas Thompson, who is camped next to me at the table, an' has had marital experiences which culminates in a divorce down Laredo way, I overhears him grind his teeth, plenty determined, an' mutter:

"By the Lone Star of my natif state, I won't be took!"

"We're all some eager to ask about them tidings which Missis Rucker ropes onto in Tucson, but none has the nerve. It's Faro Nell who comes headin' to the general rescoo. She's perched next to Cherokee Hall, an' looks gent'ly up from a piece of pie she's backin' off the board, and says:

"Good sakes, Missis Rucker! An' whatever do you-all track up against about pore Mister Rucker?"

"That unfortunate pard o' my bos'm has departed this life," responds the widow, moppin' away her grief. "I crosses up with a Tucson party, who ashores me that when them Apaches goes all spraddled out last spring, they nacherally begins them hostilities by prouncin' on Rucker, an' leavin' him on both sides of the canyon."

"That's right," chimed in Dave Juit, who, bein' married a whole lot to Tucson Jennie, feels immune from further wedlock. "Whenever them savages digs up the war-ax, they yoostally inaugurates negotiations by layin' out what palefaces is weak-minded enough to be caught among 'em, too dead to skin. No; it ain't c'moot, it's caution. Which they figgers them squaw-men if spared, will be off to the nearest army post, with pre-mator word of the uprising. Wharfore, they descends on 'em like a fallin' star, an' blots 'em out. After which they proceeded with their regular killin' an' skelpin' more at leisure."

"It's over in the Red Light, to which we repairs when feed is through, that the subject comes up in form. Black Jack, the barkeep, is so impressed by the gravity on our faces as we files in, that he announces the drinks is on the house. We refouses; it bein' too close on the hocks of that saltchons an' them flapjacks for nose-paint, an' we take seegars instead. When we're smokin' sociable, an' has become somewhat unbuckled an' confident ag'in in spite of them alarmin' fulminations of Missis Rucker, Enright brings the topic for'ard."

"About her bein' a widow that a-way, Doc?" he says, addressin' Peets. "What do you-all, as a scientist, think yourself?"

"Which it seems feasible enough," responds Peets, bitin' thoughtful at his seegar. "You know what Injuns be. Startin' out to slay, they ain't apt to overlook no sech bet as Rucker. They'd be onto him, first flas' out o' the box, like a mink onto a settin' hen."

"Yes," returns Enright, some one-easy as to tone. "I reckon you calls the turn, Doc. They'd about bump off old Rucker by way of curtain-raiser, as they calls it over to the Bird Cage op'ry house."

"Don't you allow now," breaks in Boggs, some agitated, appealin' to Enright an' Peets together—"don't you allow, now, that old Rucker bein' wiped out that a-way sort o' leaves the camp ongarded?"

"As how?" returns Peete.

"As how?" repeats Boggs, his excitement risin'. "What's to prevent risin'. What's to prevent her descendin' on one of us, like a pan of milk from a top shelf itself, an' weddin' him a heap? She's a mighty resolute female is Missis Rucker, an' it's only last week she ups an' saws it off to me, abrupt, that she's jest 38 years old last grass. I sees her drift now! That lady's makin' ready for a spring. Which she's aimin' to snatch a husband from our shrinkin' midst; an' nothin' short!"

"After what I passes through with that Laredo wife of mine," says Texas Thompson, grim as a tombstone, "you can gamble a bloo stack I'll never be married alive."

"As to myse'f," remarks Peets, imitatin' a cheerful countenance, "I'm barred. Drug sharps, under the rooles, cannot be claimed in private matrimony—belongin' as they do to the community. Enright yere is likewise out, bein' too old."

"That's right!" coincided Enright, relief stealin' into his eyes; "I'm too far gone in years to be raw material for nuptials. Speakin' what I feel, however, I looks on the situation as serious. As Dan says, it's plain she has intentions. Then thar's that black flock! Which widows is dangerous in precise proportion as they sheds tears an' plies on mournin'. It's my unbiased judgment she's fixin' her sights for Dan or Texas thar."

"Gents," interrupts Texas Thomp-

son, "Missis Rucker is onapproached an' onapproachable—her pies is poems an' her beans a dream."

"No; as I states, the timidities of Boggs an' the balance ain't upheld. Not that Missis Rucker don't frame it up none to come flutterin' from her lonely perch; only it ain't Boggs, or Texas, or any of the boys proper—it's old Col. Coyote Clubs on whom she's clostin' down."

"You recalls how, yestofore, I on-furled to you concernin' the little colonel—how he's grizzled, an' harmless, an' dried, an' lame of the nigh hind laig—how he's got a face like a squinch owl—innocent an' wide-eyed an' full of ignorant wonder, like life is an oncin'd s'prise party? As I then explains, he's plisenin' coyotes, a dollar a pelt, an' at first has a camp an hour's ride over towards Tucson."

"Mebby it's two months prior to when Missis Rucker gives it out she's alone in the world, an' goes to ghost dancin', that he done give up his dug, an' takes to boardin' at the O. K. Restauraw. Bein' gregarious, the colonel likes company; an' as for them little wolves, they're as prolific an' apt to find his arsenic in the suburbs of Wolfville itse'f, as farther out on the plains. So, as I observes, he's now gettin' his chill-con-came at Missis Rucker's an' workin' out from camp instead of into it."

"Which it's plenty like we-all would have seen it was the colonel's personal trouble from the jump, only the day Missis Rucker goes into black an' scares us up that-a-way, the old cimmarron is across to Red Dog, dealin' for a train of burros to pack his wolf pelts to Tucson. As it is, it ain't a day after he gets back before he identifies him as the gent in interest. Missis Rucker, as though concealment is now at an end, an' the hour ripe for throwin' off disguise, takes to hoverin' over him at chuck time, with a terrifyin' solicitude that comes mighty close to bein' tenderness. She takes to heapin' his plate with viands, to a degree that's enough of itse'f to set any sort of thoughtfulness to pumpin' sideways. It shore rattles the colonel, you can bet, an' his appetite gets less the more she lavishes them delicacies upon him."

"Which you ain't eatin' more than sparrow birds, colonel," she says, givin' him a most onmistakable grin. "Yere; let me get you some plum preserves—which they ought to tempt a angel!"

"With that she totes forth one of her particular airtights, which even Enright don't get a glimpse of only Fo'th of Jooly an' Christmas, an' on-loads the same on the colonel. He grows white at this; for, jest as the good book says that it's vain for the fowler to spread his nets in the sight of any bird, so also it is fooltite for a widow to go oninadin' any special gent with plum preserves, an' hope

to have them sweetmeats miscon-stroed."

"Shore, the colonel—for all he's the guilestest party that ever makes a moccasin track in Arizona—realizes she's put him in nomination to be Rucker's succession. Likewise while the outfit grasps this trooth; an' while the colonel is turnin' gray about the gills, Boggs is breathin' freer, an' even the desperate look in the eyes of Texas Thompson begins to fade away."

"Which the same shows how at bottom man is a animal utterly selfish. Once Boggs an' Texas an' them others feels safe, the knowledge that the pore old colonel must go cavortin' across the red-hot plowshares, don't bother 'em a bit. They all likes him plenty sincere at that. But sech is life! They coldly leaves him to trend the wine-press alone, an' all as onfeelin' as a band of prairie dogs. Which I don't scruple later, to reproach Boggs with this yere lack of sympathy."

"What can we-all do?" he replies. "I'm a friend of the colonel's; but what then? This is a case whar every gent must kill his own snakes. Besides, I see now, she's doo to make him happy. Do you note how free she plays them plum airtights on him? An' no more holdin' back, than if they're canned tomatoes! Rightly looked at, the colonel's in a heap o' luck."

"Enright is plumb c'rect in his count-up of the colonel. As Boggs observes, he's game as tranters; still, it's his hand, it's his onswervin' pliteness, an' good manners that's bound to hold him. Which said trooth is evident, when the colonel discusses this new an' surpris' s'iant in his fortunes with Enright an' Peets. This yere caucus occurs two days later, after Missis Rucker offers him her hand."

"It's about second drink time in the evenin' when the colonel, lookin' pale an' shaken, comes totterin' into the Red Light, askin' for Enright, Cherokee Hall, with Faro Nell 's; he look's out, is dead in bank at the time, an' styers of us is secin' what we can do ag'inst him; but, at sight of the colonel's face, one an' all we

add, that Wolfville, as a strictly moral outfit, ain't hungerin' for no Enoch Arden games. What's your judgment, Doc?"

"Which I entertains feelin' sim'lar," returns Peets. "We shore don't want to go ribbin' up no situation, whar one lady has two husbands. Thar's everythin' to be said ag'inst sech a social seculism, not only from standin' moral, but economic. Besides, Red Dog, our hated rival, wouldn't c'ease to throw it up."

"The question bein' gen'ral in its operations," breaks in Boggs ag'in—he's been whisperin' mighty feverish to Texas Thompson—an' speakin' for Texas yere, as well as myse'f, I'd like to ask the colonel, now he casts doubts on a reversed lady's widowhood, whatever is to be his ensoin' move? Also, I desire to be heard as sayin' that, offerin' as he does them doubts by way of defense, the burden of proof is on him. It's for him to show the lady's married, not for Wolfville to demonstrate she's single none!"

"Gents," said the colonel, interruptin' Enright as he's about to reply, words is unnecessary. I accepts the position of Mr. Boggs as bein' sound an' solid as a sodhouse. All asks is time. I've but one request—an' I b'asse it, as yerefore announced, on purely moral grounds. I merely asks that you hold Missis Rucker at bay while I takes the trail of that former husband, an' runs it out. Mebby them hostiles don't kill him none. Mebby he lives an' breathes, while gents who are blameless an' innocent go facin' dangers which of right belong to him alone!"

"How long," asks Enright, "do you allow it'll take to settle the life or death of Rucker? You can see yourself, colonel, thar's a limit ought to go with this. It would be preposterous to assume that you are to hold the affections of a lady in abeyance, while you go romancin' about in the hills indefinite."

"Six months," returned the colonel, pleasantly; "six little months is all I ask. If I don't drive this yere ab- seconer into the open by then, I'll return an' accept my bliss without a quiver."

"Thar's nothin' to it, Sam!" remarks Peets, an' his manner is decisive; the colonel's plumb inside his rights. Thar Rucker is dead rests wholly on the feather-blown bluff of some onnamed sport in Tucson. At the most, sech a condition furnishes us nothin' more cogent than supplings, an' the good repute of Wolfville ought not to be resked, or trifled away, on arguments so insecure."

"You're right, Doc," says Enright, musin'ly. "Which bein' settled, it's my judgment the colonel had better begin his still hunt instanter, an' not wait until the lady becomes privy to his designs. She might take them doubts about her widowhood invidious."

"Enright's notion as to promptitude prevails, an' the colonel allows he'll go trackin' off for Rucker that very evenin'. Tharupon Boggs—he's been watchful as a lynx throughout—ag'in intervenes.

"As gents possessin' colla'ral interests," says he, "Texas an' I'll jest about accompany the colonel a whole lot."

"Which you ain't intimatin' that I'd break my compact none about returnin'?" asks the colonel, his eyes bein' ginnin' to sparkle.

"Not at all!" returns Boggs. "We're goin' along in the capacity of guardian angels to you personal. Them Apaches nigh down you; an' thar's too much dependin' on your life for us to take them chances."

"While the ponies is bein' saddled an' brought up, an' Black Jack is fillin' the canteens, Enright draws Peets aside.

"How about it, Doc?" he whispers. "Would you let Dan and Texas both go?"

"This why not?" S'posse, for any conceivable reason, none of them parties come back. You don't want to forget that you an' we are the next two chickens on the roost. How do you know that, in sech events, your profession as a medicine sharp or my years protect us? Remember, Missis Rucker ain't no girl!"

"That's all right," returns Peets, confident and firm; "if Dan an' Texas an' the colonel fails us, as a last resort we'll emulocate the ancient Romans. When they wanted wives, they jumped an outfit called the Sabines, an' navericked 'em. That's what we'll do if forced. When things get dealt down to the turn, an' thar's nothin' but you an' me in the matrimonial box, we'll nacherally ride over to Red Dog, an' rope Missis Rucker up a he'pmeet from among thar hamlet's deboshed citizenry. Thar's j'ew in Red Dog who, at the simple mention, would come a-runnin'."

"It's the next day before Missis Rucker learns how the colonel, with Boggs an' Texas coverin' the play, has gone rummagin' off after the refault-er. When she hears of it she searches Injuns over Enright, whar he's buyin' shirts in the New York store. Faro Nell an' Tucson Jennie is with her, an' the three looks plenty ominous an' warn."

"Which, I deemands to know, Sam Enright," says Missis Rucker, an' her manner is mighty truculent, "what do you an' Doc Peets mean?"

"Yes!" chorus the other two; "what do you-all mean?"

"Do you reckon I'll allow you two sets to go knockin' round in my duties like blind dogs in a meat shop?" adds Missis Rucker.

"My dear madaam," reconstrates Enright, placatin' her; "what we does is wholly for your defense. Says we: 'Colonel, you can't have that lady until you proves conclusive she's a single footier. She's a prize worth strugglin' for, an' waitin' for; an' if you're worthy of her, you won't be-gre the time an' labor to produce evidence that her former husband is de-funct.' The colonel struggles against this dictum, for his love is overpowerin'. But he is also a gent of reason, so at last he submits."

"This yere'll do for a sing-song, Sam Enright!" returns Missis Rucker—none the less she's softened by them encomiums—but whyever then don't the colonel bid me a fond adoo?"

"Which he couldn't have stood it none," declares Enright. "He says so himse'f. 'Let us start at once!' is his observation. 'If ever I sets eyes on her feechures, their allorin' loveliness will carry my resolution off its feet.' An' so—the Doc an' I an' Boggs an' Texas concurrin'—they goes prancin' off for the mountains, without further procrastinations."

"All right, Sam Enright," remarks Missis Rucker after thinkin' a spell, her tones full of meannin'; "since you-all sees fit to pick up my hand an' play it, you'd shore better make it

win. You can gamble the limit, if my colonel don't come back to me no more, I'll jest the same know what to do."

"You hears her, Doc?" whispers Enright; "an' cool and steady as he is, he can't repress a shudder."

"However, the kyrd falls as they should. It ain't three weeks before the colonel, with Boggs an' Texas, comes ridin' in, whoopin' an' shoutin' triumphant. Which thar's reason in their whoops; for along with 'em, his feet tied underneath a pony, is Rucker, lookin' as morose as a captive badger. Thar's an Apache ridin' along, who's out to offer explanations

an' take the Rucker pony back ag'in—the same bein' his chattel. "Which I informs this aborigine," explains Boggs, in elucidation of the Apache that a-way, "that he's been harborein' a criminal in this yere footigitive Rucker. I tells him he'll play in luck if the Great Father don't send his big thunder guns to blow him an' his outfit off the map. I hands him these fictions for fear, if once he grasps what we really aims to do with pore Rucker, his humanity gets to millin', an' he turns loose in his blinded way an' gives us a battle."

"Well, well!" says Texas Thompson, as he swings from the saddle an' saunters into the Red Light to wash the dust from his throat; "now it's over, I'm yere to say I feels a lot re-

lieved. It ain't overstatin' the case when I announces that it's the first time, since Missis Rucker puts on black an' hands it out she's single, I've felt my old-time self."

"As to the Apache, Enright assures him no apologies is necessary. Meanwhile the colonel—who's sort of hysterical—heaps that savage with presents to the y'ears. He certainly goes endow that painted outcast with half the New York store!"

"Whar did you-all run up on him, Dan?" asks Peets, alloodin' to Rucker.

"Which we discovers the old ground-hog," says Boggs, "in camp with them Apaches, an' all as contented as a toad under a cabbage leaf. The outfit he's with war'n on no war-patch. It's that bunch over by the Cow Springs, with which these yere Injuns of Rucker's ain't been speakin' in terms for moons, that dug up the war-ax last spring. It's my belief this deceitful Rucker starts them tales about his death himse'f. It would be jest his size; for he's as cunning that a-way as a pet fox."

"When the footigitive is reestored to Missis Rucker that lady never says a word. She looks sour as lemons, though; an' the glances she casts at Enright an' Peets borders on the baleful."

"An' I ain't above remarkin', Sam," observes peets to Enright, commentin' on them glances, "that—only I knows her to be honest an' troo an' humane at heart—I figger she'd half-way like to put a spider in your biscuit, for roundin' Rucker up."

"It's the day followin' that exlie's return, an' from whar we sits in the Red Light, we can see him settin' the table for supper, rattlin' cups an' slamm'in' plates percussive, an' all a heap eegreous an' recalcitrant."

"Go over, Jack," says Enright to Jack Moore, which latter gent acts in the dual role of marshal an' kettle-tender for the stragglers—of which arm of Wolfville justice, Enright is chief—go over an' bring that miserable tarripin to me. I wants to give him warnin'."

"In a moment Jack is back with the old felon, who looks as genial as a sore-head b'ar."

"See yere, Rucker!" says Enright, his tones ringin' hard an' cold, like iron on ice. "A word is as good as a thump in the ribs to a blind mule. Now remember! If ever you-all plays the domestic troat in the footture, an' go to abandonin' them felicitities which surrounds you—an' which I fears you are far from appreciatin'—Wolfville rides forth on your trail in a body, an' swings an' rattles thar-with until you're took. Also, your next return to camp will be signalized, with restoration to the lovin' embraces of a wife who dotes on you be-yond your measly deserts, but by stringin' you up to the windmill, by way of warnin' to husbands with tastes for solitood an' travel, an' as showin' what happens to a married gent who persistently omits to come home. You go back now to settin' them tables; but as you do, b'ar in mind that the Wolfville eye from now has got you focused!"

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TO REMOVE INK STAINS.

Preparation Will Dissolve and Entirely Remove the Blemish.

In two quarts of water, previously boiled and cooled, dissolve four ounces of citric acid. Add six to eight ounces of a strong strained solution of borax, after which the whole may be put in a bottle. Then to two quarts of water previously boiled and cooled, add three-quarters of a pound of chloride of lime. Shake and let stand from four to six days, after which strain and add from six to eight ounces of borax in a strong solution, and place in a separate bottle.

To remove ink from paper, cloth or other absorbent substances, the composition in bottle No. 1 is applied so as to saturate thoroughly the ink-covered spot; a blotter placed underneath will absorb all waste moisture. Rinse out, then apply fluid No. 2.

By the combined use of the two fluids thus described writing inks or other fluids will be immediately dissolved and removed. If ink spot is on paper the paper can then be rewritten on.

LITTLE LABOR SAVERS.

Have system in your work. Keep a high stool in the kitchen. Use a wooden-handled spoon for stirring.

See that knives are kept sharp. A potato slicer will be found a most useful device.

Get all the materials together before starting baking or cooking. A stiff brush will be useful for cleaning greasy pans.

Keep a little scrubbing brush for scouring potatoes.

A whisk broom is invaluable for cleaning out corners.

Keep a house painter's brush for dusting tufted furniture.

Cheesecloth dusters are best, and a feather duster is indispensable.

Keep a large lump of washing soda on grating over the sink.

Fill dishes and pans with water as soon as empty.

Wash dish towels daily. When greasy throw them into hot water, strong with borax or household ammonia. They should be boiled at least once a week.

Oysters Roasted.

Allow four or five oysters for each person. Drain them from the liquor and look them over carefully to free them from bits of shell. Place them in buttered scallop shells, having as many shells as individuals to be served. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, bits of butter, and one drop of tabasco sauce to each shell. Place the shells in a dripping pan and cook in hot oven until the oysters are plump and the edges curled. Garnish with toast points and a little sprig of parsley.

The oysters should be prepared but not cooked until the guests are seated at the table, as they cook very quickly and should be served immediately.

Soft Hermits.

One-half cupful butter, one cupful sugar, three cupfuls raisins seeded and chopped, two eggs well beaten, one-half cupful milk, one cupful flour, one-half level teaspoonful each of cinnamon and clove, one-fourth level teaspoonful each of mace and nutmeg, three level teaspoonfuls baking powder, flour to make a soft dough.

Cream the butter, add the sugar, then the raisins and eggs. Beat well, add the milk and the flour, spices, and baking powder sifted together. Add enough more flour to make a soft dough; roll out, cut and bake in a quick oven.

Oysters a la Francesca.

Scald 25 oysters in their own liquor until plump, then drain and strain the juice, melt two tablespoonfuls of butter in a saucepan, and rub on four tablespoonfuls of flour. When smooth add the oyster juice, then add a cupful of milk or cream and season to taste with salt, pepper, and a pinch of paprika. Remove from the fire and stir in the beaten yolks of three eggs and again place over the fire and stir until creamy and smooth, then turn out on a heated dish with a border of triangular pieces of toast. Do not allow to stand after adding the cream and egg.

Pea Pudding.