

NABBY'S HUSBAND.

“Nabby, what’s the matter now, Nabby?” said the squire, good-naturedly. “Are you sick?” “No, I am,” said Nabby, emphatically, with a snap of her black eyes. “I’m sick to death of Josiah. I can’t stand him any longer, and I’ve come to talk with you about getting a divorce. You see he’s been a grovelling, worse and worse now for a good while. I’ve kept it to myself pretty much, because I was ashamed of it, and then I kept hoping he’d do better. I’ve talked and talked to him, and said and done every thing a woman could, but it seemed as if the more I talked the worse he grew.” “Josiah looked at Nabby’s rather sharp, hard face, and perhaps was hardly surprised as Nabby expected that Josiah had not been reformed by the vigorous ‘talking to’ he had undoubtedly received. Nabby’s eyes were more and more shrewd and good for nothing,” continued Nabby. “I’ll finally, he didn’t do much but set around the kitchen fire, half loafing. If there’s anything I like, I burst out Nabby. ‘It’s a man forever sitting round the house underfoot. And there I was a-takin’ in washin’, and a-lavin’ early and late, to be kinder decent and breaded, and him no better’n a dead man on my hands, so far as helpin’ any was concerned. And so I told him, time and again. He worked just about enough to keep himself in drink. He knew he couldn’t git any of my money for that. ‘But I stood it till about a fortnight ago, I’d been workin’ hard all day helpin’ Miss Barber clean house, and it seemed as if every bone in my body ached, and I was so tired, I came along home, thinkin’ how good my cup of tea’d taste. The first thing I see, when I opened the kitchen door, was old Hank slater sittin’ there in my rookin’ chair. He and Josiah were both drunk as-as Angels,’ said Nabby, slandering an innocent animal to suit her taste for a smile. “They’d tracked the mud all over my clean floors. The cookin’-stove was jammed full of wood, roarin’ like an engine, and I wonder they hadn’t burned the house up before I got there. And they’d got my best tea-pot out to head some water, and the water, as all bled away, and the bottom come out. But the worst was to see my husband a-consortin’ with such scum of the earth as that miserable, low-lived Hank slater. I tell you, Nabby, I was mad. I just flung that kitchen door wide open, and out I—” “‘Gitt out of this house, Josiah Gould, and don’t never let me see your face inside on’t again,’ as Moses, ‘Where shall I go to, Nabby?’” “‘Hes I, I don’t care where you go to, so long’s you don’t come near me. I’ve always been a respectable woman, and I don’t want none of Hank slater’s friends round my house.’” “‘Well,’ queried the squire, as Nabby’s narrative came to a pause. “‘Well,’ said Nabby, in rather a subdued tone, ‘he wanted, and he hasn’t come back. And I want a divorce.’” “‘Now, Nabby,’ reasoned the squire, ‘you don’t want a divorce. I know you better than that. You are not the woman to give Josiah up, and let him go to the bad, without a struggle. You feel a little vexed with him now, and I don’t blame you. It is hard very hard. But you know you took him for better or worse.’ Do you think, yourself, it is quite right to break your contract because he proves the worse for you—because you are the strong one and he the weak one of the two? That don’t strike me as good Bible doctrine, Nabby. We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves,’ you know.” “‘Well, I dunno,’ said Nabby, twisting the corner of her apron dubiously. ‘I hadn’t thought on’t in that light, I must say. It’s so aggravatin’ to have such a man for a husband. Besides, I dunno he’d come back now if I wanted him to.’” “‘Hesn’t he been back at all?’” “‘Why, yes, he did come once, for a pair of pantaloons. But I didn’t take no notice of him.’” “‘Now, Nabby, you may depend upon it, it wasn’t the pantaloons he was after. He wanted to see if you wouldn’t relent. If he couldn’t get you, he’ll please to him, and I’ll warrant he will stay. Give him another chance, Nabby. Josiah isn’t the worst fellow in the world, by any means. He has his redeeming traits, after all. I believe he will do better, if you will try to help him. You know Josiah is one that bears a good deal of encouragement,’ Nabby.” “‘Well, squire, I’ll think it over. Anyhow, I’m obliged to you. You talk so sorter comfortin’ to a body. You’re your mother’s own son; just the same good heart. Would you be able to eat some of my cheese, squire?’” “‘Try me, and see, Nabby,’ said the squire, smiling, not imperiously to Nabby’s compliments. Nabby made her exit just as Mrs. Hensley ran full of wifely indignation, and in a few minutes Josiah was alone, and the squire had been allowed to see what the squire had been allowed to see at the client.” To be continued.

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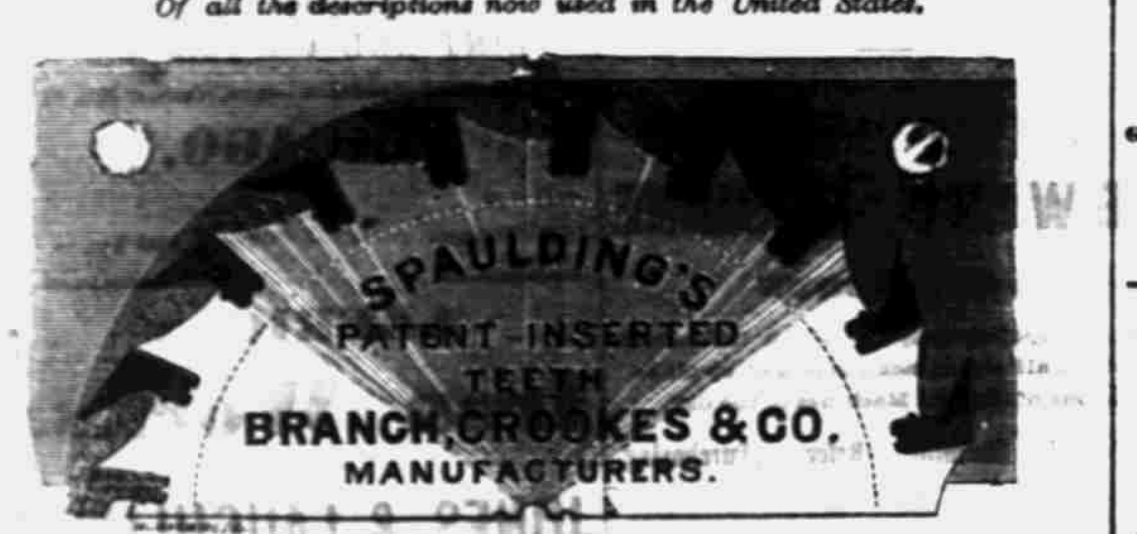
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