

an' years he has believed that he was one o' the heirs to a great estate in England worth millions and millions. It's the great Robison estate, and his mother was a Robison. He's had letters from lawyers who was sure they could establish his claim, and I reckon he has spent a good hundred dollars altogether, and the more he spends the surer he is that he's got millions in his grasp. I made up my mind years ago that it was all a piece o' humbuggery. That "estate in England" way o' flectin' money out o' greenhorns is old as the hills an' only adde-pated folks are ready to jump at a bait o' that sort. I was sure that Puffer wanted to consult his first about that estate. He'd been talkin' a lot about it of late, and had even hinted that he might take the savin's of fifteen years and go to England hisself to look after his interests and perfect his rights hisself. He was just as sure that estate was there as he was livin'. So I says to Madam Antonia:

"Did you call up Puffer's first for him?"

"No; but I mean to," says she.

"Now, she was owin' me a good-sized wash bill and a couple o' dollars for pie and doughnuts, and her bus'ness had been bad of late, and I knowed she was behind in her rent and would soon be movin' on. So I says right out to her:

"Lookee here, Madam Antonia—although you know perfectly well that ain't your name—I reckon you and me understands each other very well by this time. You know that I know that your wonderful powers are all bosh, so you won't hurt your reppytation with me none by fallin' in with what I mean to propose, for you ain't got no reppytation to lose along that line. I want you to go ahead and give Puffer his private settin' in your cabinet, only I want it to be me instid o' you in the cabinet."

"Oh, my!" says she.

"It's what I want," says I. "You an' Runnin' Water and Little Evy and Whisperin' Wind and Queen Catherine and all the others that's been in the cabinet of late kin just keep out for once and let me have a chance. I give you my word that I'll never breathe a word of it to anyone while you are here, and I'll call my account a'gin' you square."

"You wouldn't give me away to Mr. Puffer, would you?" says she.

"Well, the upshot of it all was that she agreed to it all. Puffer was to have his settin' with her that very night at eight o'clock. Now I reckon it would have tickled you to of seen me at eight o'clock that night settin' in that cabinet in one o' them long, loose, flowin' white robes I'd washed and done up with my own hands. I was there when Puffer came into the room. A minute or two later Madam Antonia put out all the lights but just a candle in a fer corner, and it shed a dim, ghostly light. Then the madam pertended to go into the cabinet, but all she done was to squat down back o' the curtains behind it. Puffer had had his orders to take his place in front o' the cabinet, and when the little curtain in front of the opening, which was about ten inches square, was pushed back it would be a sign that his first wife was in there and ready to have a little confab with him. Ever hear anything so silly in all the days of your life?"

"I never did."

"Nor I. After a minute or two I pushed back the curtain, and there I was with my face whitened with flour and a long white veil wrapped around my head something like a turban and fallin' around my shoulders. I set on a high stool well back from the front and the least mite o' light shone in. The minute Puffer put his face up to the openin' in the cabinet I says in a ghostly whisper that I'd been practisin' on all day:

"Hiram Puffer, my husband!"

"Are you my wife?" ast he.

"Well I come mighty near sayin': "You bet I am!" but I thought it wouldn't sound very spiritooal so I just says: "I am," and I had to clap my hand over my mouth to keep from gigglin'. Then I says:

"I am your wife. I am always near you, Hiram. I watch over you every day."

"You know, of course, that I—that I—am married again?" says he.

"I do, Hiram, and you have a good wife, a good, good wife. You know that, don't you, Hiram?"

"Yes," says he, "she's all right; but I dunno as it would do to tell her so."

"No," says I, "it wouldn't. And she don't tell you how much she reely thinks of you. But, Hiram, you will do well to take her advice in most things. The fact is, Hiram, she is a good deal smarter than

you are. We see things in the speerit world plainer than you earthly mortals see 'em, and since I have become a speerit I know far more than you, Hiram."

"Well, if I didn't hear that little mischief squatted down behind the curtain giggie at this, and what does she do but reach into the cabinet under the curtains and pinch my ankle. I give her a little kick and proceeded on:

"Hiram," says I, "you done well when you married the Widdler Peters. You done better than she did; but you can make yourself worthy of her if you try. I thought you might like to know that I approve of your second marriage. Your wife is a very un-us'al woman."

"I know it," says he; "but what I want to talk to you about is a bus'ness matter. Can you tell me if I am ever likely to get anything from the Robison estates in England?"

"Not a red cent!" says I in a real harsh whisper. "One thing I have come from the speerit world for is to tell you not to spend another cent on that thing. You are being tricked. There ain't no Robison estate in England. It is all a humbug. Don't you ever forget that I have said so."

"Well, he gave a kind of a little groan, and says: "You sure, Jane?"

"Kin a spirit lie?" says I reproachfully. "If you take my advice, Hiram, you will give most of your wages to your wife for her to put in the savin's bank with her own savin's. She's a longer head than you when it comes to money affairs. The Robison estate is a fake, Hiram. I'll go back to where I belong a great deal happier if you will promise me never, never to waste another cent on it, Hiram. Promise me, Birdie."

"You see when Puffer was courtin' me, he told me that his first wife used to call him "Birdie," and me callin' him that in the cabinet done a lot toward makin' firm his faith that I was her speerit. Then he says:

"I want to make sure that you are reely and truly a speerit, and I will believe it and be guided by your advice if you will answer a few questions to prove your identity to me. How old am I?"

"Sixty-three the third day o' next March."

"What is my present wife's full name?"

"Susan Adaline, and you were married to her on the fifth day of May, and she will be sixty years old the tenth of June."

"Wonderful!" says he. "There can't no one make me believe that there's no such thing as speerits after this."

"Now, Birdie," says I, "if you will go and set down in that chair on the other side o' the room I will materi'lize in full for you."

"He went and set down and I stepped out o' the door in the back o' the cabinet and walked across the floor with a kind of a wavin', dancin' motion, with my arms over my head and my white draperies floatin' out behind me in the dim light. I kind o' heetered and floated along until I come to a door leadin' into a dark passage-way, and I slipped into it and from there into my own rooms. Madam Antonia she slipped into the cabinet the minute I slipped out of it and turned the gas on strong and said to Puffer:

"You see I am still here and your wife has gone."

"When Puffer came into our rooms a quarter of an hour later I was puttin' a mixin' o' bread to rise, and I says: "Where you been?"

"Been to one o' the most convincin' materi'lizations I ever went to in my life," says he boldly, "I don't mind tellin' you, Susan, that I've been talkin' to my wife. I know you won't b'lieve it; but it's a fact, and she has told me things that makes me willin' to own up to you that you were right in thinkin' that that estate in England is a fake."

"That so?" says I, cool as a cucumber. "I'm glad of it, Hiram."

"And the next Saturday night if that man didn't hand me over a two-dollar bill and say: "I reckon you might as well put that to your account in savin's-bank, Susan."

"He never fooled away another dollar on the estate in England projec' after that, and there's above two hundred dollars in the savin's-bank to his credit—but it's in my name. As for Madam Antonia, she lit out between two days a few days later, and I never saw the poor little critter no more. And Puffer don't know to this day how lit'rally he talked to his wife that night in the madam's cabinet.—
"New York Tribune."