

THE WIDOW'S MIGHT

How the Power of Her Pies Prevailed Against Prosecution



By EDGAR WELTON COOLEY

It certainly was ominous to the peace and dignity of Saloam Center for the

two strong arms of the law to be shakin' clenched fists at one another in a manner not calculated to indicate brotherly love; but there was Squire Dale, fat, furious and forty, standin' on top of his desk, his face florid, his grayin' locks tremblin' with excitements, perspirin' profanity and scowlin' coagulated oratory at Constable Tuttle, and there was Constable Tuttle, angular, ashen and angry, mounted on a chair, combinin' out his long wiry beard with the fingers of his hand not otherwise engaged, and harpoonin' the court with epigrams as keen as a bull-terrier's appetite.

"Tut, tut, tut!" shouts the Squire, whose flow of language becomes choked in moments of accumulated agitation.

"Don't 'Tut, tut' me!" roars the constable. "I'm plumb tired of hearin' you go 'Tut, tut, tut!' like an old settin' hen every time you talk to me, and I ain't goin' to stand it. Shouldn't wonder it would give me nervous prostration. You've got to stop it!"

"I was just tryin' to say, 'Tut-Tut-Tuttle,'" snaps the Squire, his temperature risin' by leaps and bounds. "Now tell me, be you or be you not a officer of this here court, Mr. Tut-Tut-Tuttle?" says he.

"I be," replies the constable, sorrerful.

"And be you or be you not subor-bor-bordinate to me?" demands the Squire, puffin' out like a pouter pige'n.

"I be," snarls the constable.

"Then," bellers the Squire, precipitatin' his right fist into the holler of his left hand, "if I issues a writ of attat-tat-tachment, be it or be it not your boundin' duty to serve it at once, Mr. Tut-Tuttle?"

"Boundin' duty be churned!" yells the constable. "I won't do it. I tell you it's perniferous for that old skinflint to take the widder's cow, and any court that'll let him do it is—is—" He paused, gaspin' for a word equal to his feelin's.

For a minute Squire Dale was a tragic tableau. Then he fiercely scrambled down from his pedestal, grabbed his pen and jabbed it spitefully into the ink.

"Mr. Tut-Tuttle," he growls, glarin' over the top of his steel-rimmed specs, "if you don't serve this here writ forthwith and immejit, by the eter-ternal I'll fine ye for contempt of court!"

"Huh!" yells Tuttle, purt' nigh frothin' at the mouth, "huh!" he yells, jumpin' down from his chair and snappin' his fingers under the Squire's nose, "can't noboddy have contempt for this court! It's beneath contempt," says he.

The Squire gasped for breath, starin' spontaneous combustion in the face. Then he grew calmer. "Mr. Tut-Tuttle," says he sternly, "if you don't serve this writ, I—I will."

"If you do," yells the constable, poundin' the desk with his fist, "by ginger, I'll arrest you for impersonatin' a officer and—and I'll put you in jail!" "You—you—" sputters the Squire, climbin'

over the desk and layin' vilent hands on the other—"you'll do what, you brayin' baboon?"

"Say," mumbles Tuttle, suddenly sufferin' from a two hundred and twenty-pound court-plaster on the back of his neck, "say, I honestly believe I'm gettin' mad, and if you don't let me up this minute, I'm afraid I'll twist your cracked spinal column into a measly old musket and blow out your brains."

"Now, now, now," remonstrates the Squire, clampin' his fingers together a little tighter, "you wouldn't dare to distort the law that way, would you?"

"Consarn ye!" gurgles Tuttle, squirming like an angleworm. "Do you think I've got my windpipe stickin' through a hole in the wall like a blame old gasolene enjine? I can't breathe, and anyway," says he, "can't you take a joke?"

So half an hour later there was Constable Tuttle, court document in his inside pocket, tremblin' with scairt-to-deathness, on the front stoop of Widder Carleton's cottage. His timid knock was answered by the widder in pusson. Her nut-brown hair was caught back with a pink ribbon, her sleeves were rolled up to her plump elbows, her blue-gingham apron was flecked with flour, her dimpled cheeks were flushed from frequent peerin' into the oven. As she opened the door there floated out upon the air and into Tuttle's hungry nostrils the aroma of custard-pies.

"Why, howd'y, Mr. Tuttle!" she chirrups, beamin' upon him like a burst of sunlight and brushin' back a stray lock of hair that was exercisin' itself on her classic brow. "You're just in time to have a nice warm piece of pie. Walk right in."

The constable's hand crept hesitatin'ly towards his inside pocket, then suddenly withdrew. "Ahem," says he, clearin' his throat, nervously. "I—I—that is, I—"

"Yes, I know," begins the widder cheerily. "I know you never come here pu'pose to git any of my pie, but now that you're here"—she caught him by the coat and playfully pulled him inside—"I know you ain't goin' away 'thout tastin' it."

"N-o," draws Tuttle, bewildered, his hand again travelin' slowly pocketward. "N-o; but you see, Mis' Carleton," says he, "I—I hope you won't lay it up ag'in' me none."

"Law sakes!" cries the widder, placing a chair beside the table and almost pushin' the constable into it. "Law sakes, the very idee of a woman invitin' a partic'lar friend"—Tuttle blushed—"to try a piece of her pie, and then layin' it up agin' him! Why you oughter have your

tattle feebly, makin' another desp'ret effort to draw something from his pocket and failin', "you don't understand."

"Don't understand?" she interrupts, pausin' in the kitchen door and glancin' over her shoulder, coquettish. "Do you reckon I've laid two husbands under the sod for nothin'? Don't you reckon I'd oughter know something about the nature of a man? All men," says she, smilin' mischievous—"all men is alike when it comes to eatin' pie." And with that shot she disappeared in the pantry.

Tuttle took the writ from his pocket and spread it open upon the table. "Now," says he, talkin' to himself and brushin' the perspiration from his forehead, "when she comes back I'll just kinder show it to her easy and—oh, Lord!" says he, crumplin' the paper up right sudden and jammin' it into his pocket when he saw her comin' through the door, a big, round, fragrant, steamin' pie in one hand and a goblet of creamy milk in the other.

"Now," says the widder, placin' the pie and the milk in front of him and smilin' as sweet as honey, "if this don't make you glad you called—"

"I don't like it!" explodes the constable, bringin' his fist down on the table, "and by ginger, I won't have nothin' to do with it!" says he, thinkin' of his errand and feelin' uncomfortable.

"Why, why!" exclaims Mis' Carleton, her blue eyes wide open with wonder, regardin' Tuttle curiously. "Don't like custard-pie just out of the oven, and rich Jersey milk? Who ever heard—"

"Yes—no—yes," stammers Tuttle, shiftin' uneasy in his chair, and feelin' the blood settin' his temples afire. "I mean I do like it. Nothin' better on earth. Thanky, mum."

"If you find," remarks the widder, smilin' to herself and helpin' him to a quarter-section of pie, "if you find it a little better than any you ever put a tooth into," says she, "you may know it's on account of the milk. Some folks lay more on the crust, but I say it's in the fillin'. If you want good custard-pie, you've got to have good milk. Now, my cow"—Tuttle winced—"gives just the right kind of milk for pies."

Tuttle swore under his breath. "My first husband," continues the widder, "was partial to pies—custard-pies in particular. I used to warn him." she says,



"By Ginger! She'll Sue Me for Breach of Promise"