

THE DAILY HERALD.

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AN ENOCH ARDEN CASE.

How Two North Carolina Husbands Disposed of Their One Wife.

Near unto three-quarters of a century ago all the land hereabouts belonged to a man named Shepherd, a gentleman who had lived to the years of well-seasoned celibacy, acquiring meantime a liberal fortune for those early Carolina days. On a creek, a few miles inland, there lived a seafaring man known as Captain Dill, and he had made a good woman his wife, who bore him two children. Shepherd was accustomed to visit the Dills, and a friendship most commendable was maintained for years.

Captain Dill went to sea in his schooner and was overtaken by a terrible storm, which dismantled his craft, leaving the bulk floating hopelessly out of sight of land, with no living soul on board but Dill. The second day he was sighted by a French bark, taken on board and carried to Havre. Some strange fancy prompted Dill to go to Paris rather than seek passage as a seaman back to America. He remained for two years or more at the French capital, making a precarious livelihood, and if he wrote to his wife on the far-away coast of Carolina, no letter reached her. Indeed, mail facilities in those early days were not to be depended upon, and they are not remarkable even now.

Mrs. Dill, hearing nothing of her husband or his vessel, mourned him as lost. For two long years—still the regulation period, I believe—she mourned in widow's weeds and downcast eyes, struggling to support herself and children. Shepherd mingled his tears with his widow's friend, and when little scraps of white began to announce the near conclusion of her sorrowing, ventured a smile when a briny prairer was scarcely expected. Then his visits increased in frequency and length, until the indications warranted his laying his heart and his fortune at her feet. She picked up both, and became Mrs. Shepherd. In due time she bore Mr. Shepherd a son.

One sunny September afternoon, when the leaves were browning in the cemetery of Beaufort, Captain Dill stepped upon the dock of that ancient borough and was welcomed by his friends as one given back to them by the sea. He learned of the marriage of his wife to Shepherd and none spoke unkindly of the woman who had acted in the fullest faith of her widowhood. Then he rowed his boat over to the old homestead on the creek, but now deserted since Shepherd had removed the family to his own home, a few miles distant on another creek of equal linnidness.

After resting a day or so in the old haunts, Dill entered his boat and paddled leisurely toward the Shepherd home of his wife. Mrs. Shepherd said she was glad to see him, but Shepherd was somewhat mixed in his feelings. Nevertheless they hospitably entertained him, and that night, when the three children had been tucked in their trundlebeds, they talked the embarrassing matter over. Dill wanted his wife and so did Shepherd. They slept over the intricate controversy, and the next morning both husbands submitted the dispute for final decision with Mrs. Dill-Shepherd, their wife. The husband stropped down to the beach and gave her two hours for cogitation. When they returned she announced her intention of remaining Mrs. Shepherd. The two husbands shook hands and parted, Dill to resume his vacation on the sea, Shepherd to continue his farming and trading, the children to be reared by the latter.

Not quite a year elapsed before Shepherd lay down and died, thereby unravelling one stand of the twisted-up knot. Dill did the tearing and mending on this occasion, and after waiting a sufficient time to avoid the suspicion of heartlessness presented his claim as her lawfully wedded husband. Mrs. Dill was quite willing, but only after a license and a marriage ceremony. Dill submitted to the license and Mrs. Dill-Shepherd clipped the "Shepherd" from the back end of her name. And, bless you, she did more. She lived to a ripe old age and buried Dill as she had buried poor Shepherd.

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