Policy

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THE CALDWELL WATCHMAN.

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Judgment.

Fourth District Court, Parish of Caldwell, State of Louisiana.

Mrs. Pattie J. Walker wife, vs. S. D. S. Walker husband.

This case having been regularly called for trial and trial had after answer filed, and the law and the evidence being in favor of the plaintiff and against the defendant, the plaintiff having established her demand in open court: It is therefore ordered, adjudged and decreed, that the plaintiff, Mrs. Pattie J. Walker wife, do have and recover of defendant, S. D. S. Walker husband. Judgment for the sum of Three Hundred Dollars, with 5 per cent interest thereon from judicial demand, say January 2d, 1894, until paid, and all cost of suit.

It is further ordered, adjudged and decreed that the community of acqnets and gains heretofore existing between plaintiff and defendant, be and the same is hereby decreed dissolved and at an end, and that plaintiff is hereby authorized to administer her affairs as a feme sole.

Done, read and signed in open court on this the 11th day of January, 1894.

GEO. WEAR,
Judge 4th District Court.

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For the benefit of travelers by rail, we will state that for the present the north-bound passenger, No. 222, arrives at Columbia at 7:47, a. m., and passenger, No. 221, going south, arrives at 7:56 p. m.

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CHAPTER XI.

SETTLING ACCOUNTS.

Here was an unexpected turn of the wheel of fortune, a new mystery to rack the mind or give an added relish to life, just as you might chance to look at it. I was not at all sorry to find my companion gone, nor in truth greatly surprised, but his departure might portend more than it was pleasant to speculate on.

I knew my man well enough to understand at once that he had not left me upon any trivial motive nor to do good by stealth. Too much of a knave to be a fool, on his own confession a consummate rascal, ignorant or contemptuous of moral scruples, insensible to gratitude, insatiably avaricious, bold in planning and ruthless in executing, I felt he must be bent on some scheme that boded neither me nor the brig any good. I recollected with peculiar and not very agreeable sensations how he had pressed me in our bout on the evening before, and how on finding himself fairly matched his chagrin had broken through his well trained smiles and courtierlike air of compliment.

To be deprived of his company was a cause for rejoicing, for his absence relieved me of a constant source of suspicion and danger. But better a present evil than a lurking enemy. With your eye on the foe you can defend yourself, but when he may spring upon you like a tiger in the jungle at any moment from any quarter, back, front, side or oblique angle, why, the fear is apt to fret the nervous. And indeed the legions of black thoughts came trooping back upon me with such disquieting effect that, un-Christian as it may sound, I would have given much to be able to run Abram ben Aden through with my sword, and there and then make an end of him. But, as it was, I could only conjecture, and conjecturing on a matter of life and death is positively the most unsatisfactory exercise in which the human mind can engage.

You may be sure I kept a sharp lookout that day, remaining constantly under my awning, save when I ran below to douse my head, which had a feverish tendency, or swallow a mouthful of food or drink. But the day passed, and no boat or other object hove in sight. I saw neither landmark nor watermark nor even so much as the flash of a seabird's wing—nothing but the dreary, blinding glitter of the eternal ocean plain.

The darkness came, came at a stride, as Mr. Coleridge says, for in the tropics there is no twilight, but a leap from light to darkness as if the night were lying in wait and pounced upon the world as upon long expected prey. The stars came out, like points of lambient flame in a fleckless, gray blue sky, and by and by the moon rose with a sense of sovereignty, a majesty and magnificence never equaled on land. Higher and higher she mounted, her white, unveiled radiance nearly obliterating the stars in her path, and she smote with almost as cruel a stroke as the sun. There is a promise to the righteous that the sun shall not smite them by day nor the moon by night. The smiting of the sun dwellers in a temperate clime may partly understand, but the smiting of the moon never. You must go to the east and experience her addling, withering blight to comprehend the fact that a hard Arabian moon will drive a strong man stark mad in a single night if he lie unprotected from her light. Even with me under my covering she seemed to be sucking at my vitals.

Weary with watching, and to say the truth more than a trifle worried, I fed my rats and went to bed. I lay long awake in spite of fatigue and the soothing lullaby of lapping waters. At length I began to doze, frequently starting up, however, with a vivid impression of hearing Abram ben Aden calling my name. Rising on my elbow I would harken, panting with excitement. But the great silence being unbroken, save by the low, sweetly blended voices of wind and water, I would lie down again—to be honest, with something of the nervous shivering of a frightened child.

Once I was constrained to get up and look out, first on one side, then on the other. But the deep serenity of nature was undisturbed. The moon shone resplendently, and the sea, gently crisped by the breeze, sparkled like fretted silver or glowed with phosphorescent fire. The night wind, soft and warm and odorous, caressed my face and head with a wooing murmur that would have been delicious had I been in a frame of mind to enjoy it, and far aloft the stars palpitated in their azure setting with a sort of tender compassion.

Ah, mystery of mysteries, how came all those splendors to be above me, and how came I of all the millions on earth to look up at them from such an utter desolation? Did I need the lesson of human feebleness more than any one else? Was my pride so stubborn, my disobedience so great, that I had to be sent out here a second and lonelier Ishmael to be humbled and corrected? If the sins were many, truly the punishment was sore. Faint and quivering, I leaned against the side for support, and as I rubbed a clammy face there was wrung from my heart that piteous cry that went up from Calvary—the cry which vents the concentrated misery of a lost race, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

And immediately, as if by celestial impulse, my mind flew back to a heathery braeside, and I was nestling from threatening perils in arms that compassed me safely about—as one whom his mother comforteth. The wounded animal seeks its lair that it may die in peace; the wounded spirit turns home that it may be strengthened and solaced, were it only by mere recollection. But for that divine memory, that swift flight through space and time, I might have gone that instant and leaped from the bulwarks into the flood below. It was an impotent mood, the mood of a coward, if you like, but let those who have been similarly tried say if their hearts have never failed them. And let those who have never borne the stress of misfortune beware what fate has in store for them, and remember that "they jest at scars who never felt a wound."

I returned to bed by and by, falling asleep at length on a resolution to be up next morning with the sun. As it turned out, I was astir in advance of my time. Just as the first glimmer of dawn flickered on the sea I was startled by a noise of ropes upon the ship's sides, a scurrying of feet on the deck and a tumult of contending voices in shrill confusion all round. Quick as thought I tumbled out of bed, threw on my clothes, stuck a brace of revolvers in my belt, grasped my sword and bounded up the companionway. At the head there was an abrupt and uncomfortable stoppage, for no sooner did my foot touch deck than a score of gleaming scimiters were circling about my throat, preventing the slightest chance of defense.

A throng of swarthy, fierce eyed, vociferating villains pressed and brandished their weapons so truculently that I could have sworn to a chilly sensation of steel in my windpipe, though as yet no one had actually touched me. Divining that the rascals were Arabs, I demanded in the Arab tongue, and in rather gasping accents, what this sudden invasion and hostile display meant. At this a familiar voice called out, "Enlarge thy turban, friend; great is the bountifulness of fortune to her favorites!" There was a sardonic laugh from those whose blades were closest about my neck. Then one who seemed to be the leader, pushing a little forward, said sternly: "This ship is ours. If thou art in love with thy life, surrender; if thou art tired of it, resist. Speak quickly."

The logic of this laconic speech being perfectly irresistible, I immediately answered: "Since I value my life notwithstanding the difficulty of preserving it, I surrender. Will my friends lower their swords, for, to say the truth, they cause me an uneasy itching."

"When thou hast given up thy weapons," said the spokesman curtly.

"They who do me the honor of this visit belong to a brave and chivalrous people," I rejoined, remembering Asian manners. "I know their history, and the songs of their poets, and the valor of their deeds. I am a stranger, alone and at your mercy. My arms are my sole possession. I pray you let me keep them."

"Nay, by Fatima's eyelash, arms in thy hands are as poison in the adder's tongue!" cried Abram ben Aden, coming forward so that I now caught sight of him. There was a diabolical fire in his black eyes, and his face bore an insolent leer of triumph. The look of him put all my fear to flight, and in its place kindled a sudden and savage desire to be revenged.

"That man," I said, pointing in scorn and anger at him and forgetting the fate that was so imminent; "that man has betrayed me. He has brought you here to plunder. Is it not so?"

Perhaps it was the unexpected audacity of my mien and question that made them answer so promptly and frankly, but instantly a dozen of them called out, "It is so."

"I have taken this viper to my breast," I cried, "and he has stung me. It is a base thing that stings the hand that helps it. By your love of vengeance, I charge you to leave him to me. Let it be seen this day how treachery and ingratitude can be requitted. We two have eaten salt together. I took him in, giving him of my best, and now he clamors for my life. It is his if he can take it. You will grant the prayer of a forsaken stranger that no hand but his enemy's be raised against him. I trust to your honor to see justice between man and man."

All this while the Arabs were swarming upon deck and pushing and crushing and craning to see me and catch my words. Their looks encouraged me. "The ship is yours," I went on, still more boldly. "I yield it without a murmur; only let me put my life against the life of this son of a dog."

"Why do we waste time?" demanded Abram ben Aden savagely. "Let his infidel throat feel the edge of a believer's sword. Who is he that he should bandy words with us? Off with his head, to the sharks with his carcass, and let us to the spoil!"

"Thy tongue is too fast for thy wit, Abram ben Aden," said the man whom I took to be leader. "He has yielded the ship to us. He is ready to put his life upon thy blade point if thou will grant him a like privilege in return. A fair bargain, by the memory of Sikandar-el-Rumi. Many a time hast thou boasted of thy skill with the sword; thou lovest revenge as well as any man. Here is thy opportunity to show thou possessest one and canst take the other. What think ye?" addressing his comrades. "Is it not as I say?"

"It is as thou sayest," came quickly in chorus from the twoscore eager men.

Judging it best to take prompt advantage of this change of sentiment in my favor, I strode forward, and before he could raise a finger to prevent me caught Abram ben Aden firmly by the beard.

"Last night we ate salt together," I said. "It was the vow of friendship. Today I spit in thy vile face. It is the vow of eternal enmity," and suiting the action to the word I spat full in his face. It is the greatest affront you can offer an Arab, or indeed to any man of the Moslem faith.

"Thou shalt rue it!" he shouted, stamping with rage, while he wiped his face. "By the holy prophet, thou shalt rue it! Mark me, son of an infidel dog, my sword will slake its thirst in thy blood. I will hew thee in pieces. I will scatter thee to the winds, so that no man can gather the fragments."

In an instant I was back, with my sword drawn ready for the attack.

"Thou hast there the sword I gave thee," I said. "Crown thy baseness and scatter me."

"Thou art a fool!" he hissed. "There are better things than letting the blood out of thy foul Christian body. I will take revenge for this defilement; yea, revenge that will not so much as leave thy name among men, but not now."

"Hear how a coward can speak," I said to the crowd. "But give us room. Either he takes his revenge now, or I take mine."

"Yea, leave them room!" rose on all sides, and the mass pushed back, making a vacant space in the middle. On the one side stood Abram ben Aden, his lean dark face like a fiend's, and his fingers nervously clutching the handle of his sword. On the other was I, motionless, deadly white, I am sure, but with a fixed determination to die or have vengeance. I was perfectly calm, probably because the hazard was so desperate. The gaze of all those alien eyes was as nothing; as nothing, too, was the chance of being killed. Thought and purpose and feeling were concentrated on the man opposite.

I made a movement forward, and Abram ben Aden tried to squeeze back, saying it was of more consequence to secure the booty than to turn aside to put a toad out of existence. But the circular human wall was solid, and he could not get away. As he struggled ignominiously I advanced and struck him on the cheek with the flat of my sword.

"If there be aught else I can do to affront thee," I said, "name it."

He glared madly as I stepped back a little; then, thinking to rush in and end the encounter at a blow, he sprang upon me with the headlong ferocity of a tiger. But

He sprang upon me with the headlong ferocity of a tiger.

he had miscalculated. Swerving slightly to the side, I caught his blade on mine, and the sharp, fell ringing of steel announced to the remotest of the spectators that two men were fighting for their lives.

The crowd preserved complete silence, showing no disposition to interfere. There was no commotion; the drama of death went on without a sound save what was made by the whistling, clashing swords of the combatants, for, the Arabs being undemonstrative, take the sight of blood and the issues of life and death without excitement or horror or pity.

I have no recollection of the particulars of the fight. I only know that for my part I went at it with a single, simple purpose; that I had no thought of fancy swordsmanship, nor indeed of anything else save not to yield while I could draw breath.

My opponent had the first blood. By some accident or clumsiness on my part his sword in glancing off mine struck my shoulder, peeling it. But the wound, though it bled freely, was a flea bite, and if it had any effect at all it was to spur me on. I pressed hard, forcing my antagonist back inch by inch to larboard, the crowd giving way in that direction.

He fought like a beast of prey, but in spite of his fury, or perhaps because of it, I kept pushing him steadily before me till at last his heel was against the vessel's side. Finding himself at the wall, he uttered a great oath, the first word he had spoken since we engaged, and plied his weapon with such swiftness and force that it was a marvel I escaped being slain on the spot. No doubt it was my reckless calm that saved me. At any rate, by driving in and slashing and guarding and thrusting as if I had the eyes of Argus and the hands of Briareus I was able to maintain my ground; nay, was able to keep his back glued to the brig's side.

Blood flowed pretty freely on both sides, yet the sight of it did not relax my resolution, if resolution it can be called, which was a blind decision to have my sword in my opponent's vitals or his in mine. One of us two must die. That was the fell verdict. So we fought not to show our science, but as men fight who are bent on killing each other in the shortest possible space of time. I had but to look into his eyes to see the fate intended for me, and I daresay he looked into mine and read with equal clearness that meant for him.

There was no device known to either of us—and Abram ben Aden must have cursed himself for my dexterity—to which we did not resort. Yet the advantage hung in the balance. Terrific as the blades rang and glanced, they somehow failed to find their point on either side.

The breathing was becoming hard and fast, and there was some risk we might be deprived of the satisfaction for which both of us panted by our very eagerness and violence in trying to get it. That some such thought must have flashed across Abram ben Aden's mind was quickly made manifest by his maneuvering. Blowing and staggering as if in the last stage of exhaustion, he suddenly swerved, apparently with the intention of flight, at the same time making a very feeble defense.

The ruse nearly gave him my life. For an instant I thought I had him, and my whole being thrilled with unholy glee. But the light in his eyes and my knowledge of his crafty ways speedily put me on my guard again and restrained my ill timed exultation. Well for me that they did. Scarcely had I recovered myself when Abram ben Aden, with a great roar and strokes that fell like lightning, charged upon me, pushing me back and nearly running in under my sword. But he had delayed the onset just a second too long. Had he made his rush immediately on the heels of his retreat, I had been a dead man. But he took too much pains to mislead me. Deception had o'erleaped itself and opened my eyes.

But he was quickly to make amends for his mistake in tactics. He had been a savage before. His failure turned him into a fiend. His sword sang in my ears like a nest of hornets, and he seemed to be striking from all points at once. Overborne by an onslaught that was the very fury of the pit, I went steadily back, though exerting all my strength and skill. Abram ben Aden had got his second wind, which was stronger than the first, while I was done. The end must be at hand.

This curdling thought had just been forced upon me, when in one of our most furious moments my antagonist's sword broke without warning in his hand. My blood leaped afresh at the sight, and I must have swelled with the idea of vengeance. Now in very truth I had him, for he could not escape. With a despairing cry upon the name of Allah, he threw up his hands as if expecting to be instantly dispatched. And indeed my sword was in the air to cleave him in two, but the blow never fell. Even with all my passions aflame I could not take such advantage of a defenseless man.

"I have broken your sword," I said in a hoarse rattle; "now I will break your neck," and dropping my weapon I sprang at him. The next instant we were reeling in deadly wrestle. He was a grown man, strong, sinewy and uncommonly active. I was but a stripling, soft of bone and muscle; yet my hands were no sooner about him than I knew which of us was master. We rolled and swayed to and fro, I doing my best to squeeze and shake the wind out of him, and he striving like the foul fiend to get at my throat, but my hold was firm if my breath should be short, and besides I was at familiar exercise, whereas the game must have been strange to him.

When I judged the wind to be pretty well out of him, I drew him close to me with a sudden jerk, my elbows hard on his ribs, my left knee at the point of his right leg; then carefully maintaining the bearlike embrace while putting forth my whole strength I bent him back, and he turned over like a willow sapling. Then, clutching his throat and the lower part of his body before he could recover, I lifted him high in the air and brought him down with all my might on the edge of the bulwark. He yelled in fright and pain that his back was broken, but it was death or nothing. In an instant he was up again, but finding him limp and listless in my hands, instead of bringing him down with a second crash I cast him from me, and he fell into the sea with a splash like a log.

To be continued next week.

He Took Two.

He walked into the book store and stopped before the Bible department. He leaned over the counter and said to the ministerial looking salesman:

"Is them Buffalo Bill's books over thar?"

"Nope. Religious works."

"Don't nun o' them read about chasin' Injuns an shootin' wild varmints?"

"Not exactly."

"Nothin' about a feller that could knock 'em out like John L, ner a feller 'ats slick with er Winchester, er hed the nerve to tackle er b'ar?"

"Oh, yes. One better than that."

"Who's he?"

"Samson."

"What'd he do?"

"Oh, he had a fight with a lion.

"Laid 'em out, did 'e?"

"Yes, he killed the lion."

"Jes' bored 'im with er Winchester?"

"Nope."

"Biffed 'im in the head with er ax, I s'pect?"

"Nope."

"Jes' kyarved 'im with his old bowie?"

"No, he just caught the beast by the throat and choked him to death."

"You don't say?"

"Yes. He was the strongest man that ever lived."

"Wusser'n John L?"

"Yes."

"An' wusser'n Jimmie Corbitt?

"Samson could knock them both out at once."

"Whoopee! Aint he the stuff? I'll take two o' them Samson books.—Atlanta Constitution.

Ancient Egyptian Treasure

A discovery of unusual interest has been made by Mr. Morgan, who is directing the excavations now in progress in the interior of the Pyramids. It is nothing less than the treasury of one of the several Kings of the Twelfth Egyptian dynasty, who were known by the name of Usurtesen. The treasure was hidden in a roval tomb, and consists of numerous gold ornaments incrusted with precious stones, including a crown. If the ancient King put by the hoard for the benefit of his posterity he was only too successful. His heirs have been kept waiting nearly 5,000 years, it is true, and the King would probably fail to recognize his intended beneficiaries in the finders of the treasure. The nineteenth century is, nevertheless, indebted to this King Usurtesen, of the third millennium B. C., for his careful disposition of his wealth. The historic value which the lapse of time has attached to the articles discovered is many times in excess of their intrinsic value, great as this may be.

The Position of Cotton.

Although the cotton market has fluctuated frequently of late, prices have generally gravitated back to the neighborhood of 7 cents per pound, a very low figure when compared with what the cotton trade has been accustomed to for years past. Low as this figure is, however, there is really no assurance that prices will not go even lower, although the present statistical position does not warrant such a decline, and in the opinion of some authorities even an improvement would be justified.

The future of prices is, however, entirely in the hands of cotton producers. Should they resolve to increase the acreage devoted to cotton so that the total area would prove larger than last year by even a moderate amount, it is more than probable that it would be impossible to maintain even present prices, unless there should be an unexpected revival of American trade. On the other hand, however, should the farmers restrict themselves to last year's acreage, it is likely that the present price would be thought to have discounted all unfavorable features, and there would be, at least, a steady market, if, indeed, an actual improvement did not take place.

The question of acreage is, therefore, the most serious problem confronting the cotton industry at the present moment. It is scarcely reasonable to expect that the farmers will reduce their acreage from what it was last year, but they certainly should be advised to avoid even the smallest increase in the area devoted to cotton. The proper policy would be to give more attention than ever before to food crops and to general diversified farming, with a view to decrease the cost of growing the cash crop rather than to increase its production.

By pursuing this last-named policy, the farmers will not only saddle themselves with a smaller burden of debt, but they will be actually providing a better market for the season's crop, thus preparing the way for a more prompt return to prosperous conditions than is at all possible in the case of any of the other great agricultural industries of the country.—Picayune.

An Irish Solomon.

A case came up once before the Eyrecourt (Ireland) petty sessions in which the decision handed down by the magistrates proved them to be worthy inhabitants of a world once graced by the presence of Solomon. The dispute was between two brothers and related to the ownership of a couple of ducks. One brother charged the other with having stolen both birds, and the latter flatly claimed that they were his own. The magistrates resolved to leave the question to the superior sagacity of the ducks. By their order a policeman took the birds in a bag to a point on the road midway between the homes of the contestants and there released them. The ducks separated, one going to the plaintiff's house, the other to the defendant's, and, in the words of the official report of the case, "the case was settled accordingly."—New York Sun.