

The Free Press Short Story

The Last Witness for the Defence

By ALICE DYAR RUSSELL

"YOU'RE not interested!" Marcia Kemp set her new movie camera down, somewhat peevishly and turned an accusing gaze on Gerry Howe, her fiancé. "You haven't listened to a word I've said!"

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"Oh, I can tell you all right, but what's the use? I ought to keep my business troubles at the office. Maybe I would if I wasn't such a brand new lawyer and you weren't such a dear. Maybe I would anyway, if this didn't strike so near home. It's that damn suit, Marcia."

"Against your Uncle George Howe?" inquired Marcia, alertly. "Yes, against good old Uncle George. I was awfully set up when he told me he would let me handle it; but I certainly wish he had given it to some one else. He's so proud of me, thinks I can work miracles, and I'm going to fall him. He hasn't the ghost of a chance to win. If Miss Leech gets a judgment of even \$10,000, it will simply put him out of business. And I'm convinced that she's simply out for Uncle George's scalp—no, not book, rather! He talked back to her, you know, and she can't stand that. She threatened to make him sorry."

"Didn't he have accident insurance on his car?" asked Marcia in the businesslike way that was hers when she put her mind on a problem. "No, worse luck! He was hard up and he let it lapse just a week before the collision. That collision may have been his fault—there are better drivers on the road than Uncle George; but even so, unless Miss Leech goes madly and peddles her 'course' she claims to own for fifty thousand dollars is a scandal!"

"I know her," said Marcia, thoughtfully. "I never liked her much. She has the bluntest dilk for her fellow creatures and the sourest tongue! What does she claim is the matter with her?" "Almost everything!" sighed Gerry wearily. "Her complaint sounds like a surgeon's case book. Mental and physical anguish tucked in every paragraph. Total instability in the sum and substance called nerves. She never walks straight. She claims she's never walked since and never will again. If I believed her, I'd feel sorry."

"Does your Uncle George believe her?" "Not for a minute! He says the terrific crash she describes so touchingly in reality as gentle as zephyr! Says a mosquito riding with her wouldn't have had its feelings hurt!" Gerry chuckled. "You know Uncle George, how he puts things. Of course it was really worse than that, but there's no doubt she's laying it on, and it's up to me to prove it. I'm lying awake nights trying to figure out how to do it."

"The doctors?" asked Marcia. "She won't permit Uncle George's doctor to examine her, says she doesn't trust him professionally. She'll have an array of her own to testify, of course, and spinal troubles are such vague affairs. If you say you can't walk, who's going to dispute you?" "I think the judge ought to appoint a neutral medical committee," Marcia suggested heatedly.

holding a reclining figure and pushed by a dour-faced lady. The eyes of the over-the-face were not closed, however; the chair came to a halt. Miss Leech sat up briskly, peered sharply in this direction and that, swept the rug off her knees with a vigorous movement, stepped out of the chair, stretched, and walked away unconcernedly beyond the margin of the screen.

A titter rose from the massed court room; it grew in volume, became a roar of laughter. The judge rapped for order. "Your Honor! Your Honor!" Miss Leech's lawyer was shouting in the turmoil. "I object—I object!"

The lighted screen vanished; the darkness reigned for a moment; then some one raised the shades. The light revealed Marcia sitting flushed but composed in her chair, the jury presenting an interesting study of amusement struggling with indignation, the judge looked astounded and severe, Gerry amazed and triumphant, Uncle George quite beside himself with glee, and Miss Leech—ah, Miss Leech! Her face was red, her eyes darting with fury.

"I rest the case!" cried Gerry. "Marcia, you were marvellous!" said Gerry for the dozenth time that evening, and cast an admiring glance also at that instrument for the confounding of provocateurs which occupied a conspicuous place near them. "And so is that!" "Toy!" Marcia supplied demurely. "Oh, don't call it that!" Gerry said.

"Miss Marcia Kemp to the stand!" Marcia took her seat composedly and replied to the oath administered in grave, clear tones. Gerry's flustered manner as he began questioning her soon stilled under her quiet answers. "Where were you on Wednesday afternoon last, between five and six?" "In the woods, back of Miss Adelaide Leech's garden."

"What were you doing in these woods?" "I was observing the birds. There was a vireo's nest in a large oak tree, and I watched the mother bird feed her young."

"Will you describe the position you occupied?" "I was sitting cramped on a branch of this oak tree with my camera. I wanted to get a picture of the young birds and the mother."

"Will you relate what you were able to see from this point?" "I hesitated for the first time and seemed to ponder. Finally she raised her clear eyes to the judge. "Your Honor, I ask your permission to exhibit the aid of a mechanical witness more accurate and reliable than my own testimony can be."

ESTIMATE DECREASE 1936 FRUIT CROP According to the official preliminary estimate, the 1936 production of fruit in the Dominion as a whole shows a decrease in all fruits in comparison with the final estimate for the year 1935. At present Canada's apple crop is estimated at 4,078,700 barrels, which is a decrease of 354,000 barrels compared with the 1935 crop of 4,432,700 barrels.

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION UP Canadian productive operations during August showed considerable acceleration over the same month a year ago. The index of the physical volume of business, based on 45 factors, moved up to a new high point since the early part of 1930. Other major indexes also showed a gain.

CAVES GUARDED BY RED HAND Caves which natives have declared for centuries were the home of an enormous serpent waiting to devour the trespasser, has just been explored by Captain Maitland Thomson. They are in Nullarbor Plain, a treeless waste, 400 miles long and 80 miles wide, in South Australia.

AN ADVANTAGE "So you think that a college education leaves a girl better equipped for domestic life?" "Yes, replied Miss Cayenne. "When a woman loses her temper, it must be some comfort to her husband for her to express herself grammatically and even classically."

TERRIBLE Aunt Hetty—"Sakes alive, I don't believe no fat woman could ever be so fat." Uncle Sy—"What y' reading now, Hetty?" Hetty—"Why, this paper tells about an English woman who lost two thousand pounds."

ANCHORS AWEIGH We witnessed a little scene Saturday which was distinctly reminiscent of horse and buggy days. A rather large group of rather large country-folk were in town with a large open touring car. After a deal of shuffling back and forth to various shops, they assembled where the crate was parked and prepared to push off.

MEDICAL SERVICE IN THE NORTH Medical care for the native inhabitants of Canada's Far North is provided by the Canadian Government, and for thousands of miles along the Arctic coast of the Dominion, in fair weather and in foul, medical officers in the service of the government bring their healing art to the aid of the Eskimo citizens, while Inland, Indians, half-breeds and indigent whites are also given medical aid. Winter and summer patrols of hundreds of miles are not unusual, and nearly every mode of transportation known to the North country, such as aeroplanes, steamboats, motor boat, canoe, and dog sled, has been used to extend this service. Eight doctors are employed in the work, and their efforts to prevent serious illness among the northern natives are bearing fruit.

Although a healthy and orally sound race, the Eskimos are seriously susceptible to ailments which ordinarily cause white people only minor discomforts. Before the coming of the white man the Eskimos knew nothing of such common ailments as colds, influenza, and other kindred ailments, and there had been no need for their bodies to build up a resistance to the attack of these diseases. Consequently the arrival of the first whaling and trading vessels each season was followed by wide-spread outbreaks among the natives, with often disastrous results. To-day the medical services in the Far North take particular care upon the arrival of vessels to check the spread of these diseases. By instructions as to proper diets the doctors have reduced considerably the number of deaths due to dietary causes, and a most striking success has been made in the correction of methods of feeding infants and older children. In this and other ways the health of the Eskimos is being safeguarded and improved so that the benefits being derived from their contact with civilization are preserved and any harmful effects overcome or avoided.

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