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THE BRICK OFFICE

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IN the old and remote village of Ed-

dex stood a small brick building.

Formerly it had been the law

office of Judge Branham, remembered as a man of great learning and ability. And during the years that followed his death an old justice of the peace was wont to say, "Who will have the audacity to hang a lawyer's sign in front of the judge's temple of wisdom?" This remark was repeated until every man in the village claimed it—the green-grocer and the cobbler. Finally, it was agreed that no one should summon the senseless courage—this was the way it was put in the village—to occupy the little, dingy den once so nearly filled by the fat jurist.

The old tin sign hung there until it was blown away during a summer hail-storm, and after that the battered post stood holding out its naked arm. The property changed hands, but the office remained vacant. In the columns of the village newspaper it was offered for rent, and the young lawyers, taught to revere the great, sniffed at the announcement. But one morning the villagers were startled to see a new sign swinging from the old arm. "A. C. Jonnett, Attorney-at-law," in bright green letters, was plain to every gaze, and, of course, an insult to the memory held warmly dear.

"It is an outrage!" declared the old justice, having hastily arrived in his shirt-sleeves. "It is intended as an insult, and ought to be pulled down. Why, I've lived in this town sixty-odd years this spring, and I never saw the like before. Hop up there, some of you, and pull off that tin blasphemy."

"Hold on," interposed the mayor. "Let us proceed with more deliberation. Of course, this office is sacred to us, but it is now owned by a comparative stranger, and has doubtless been rented by a stranger. And, surely, when we have had a talk with him he will be willing to move to some other place. Go slow, boys. See who is inside."

A young fellow made the announcement that the office was locked.

"Ah!" said the justice, "his conscience has smitten him and he has sneaked off. But you are right, Mr. Mayor. It is better to proceed with deliberation."

Just at that moment the tavern bell rang for breakfast. No matter what the people of a remote village may be doing, or what question the wise and ancient heads of the municipality may be discussing, the ringing of the tavern bell calls an instant halt. It is the voice announcing the crawl rather than the flight of time, and in a village the fact that one hour has succeeded another hour is a great thing to know.

The justice and the mayor went home to breakfast, and, afterward, when they returned to renew their investigations, they found the office open. The mayor was the first to enter; and he had advanced but a few feet beyond the threshold when he staggered back against the justice, close upon his heels.

And then the two men stood gaping in astonishment. At the desk sat a handsome young woman.

"We—we are looking for A. C. Jonnett," the mayor stammered.

"I am that person," replied the young woman, rising, and sweetly smiling.

"What!" the justice gasped. "You don't mean to say that you are a lawyer?"

"I don't only mean to say it; I do say it."

"But I never heard of such a thing."

"Perhaps not; and there are, doubtless, many other things you never heard of."

"I don't know about that, miss. But there are a great many things I have heard of, and one of them is an honored judge whose memory—"

"That will do," she interrupted, raising her hand. "I have heard of the judge, and I respect his memory far more than you do. I have read his books and admire the keenness of his mind. Have you read his book on the fallacies of circumstantial evidence?"

"Didn't know he wrote one."

"I thought not. Did you wish to see me on any other business?"

"I believe not," said the mayor. He turned toward the door, his friend moving with him; he halted, faced about, and said:

"You surely don't mean that you are going to practice law in this town?"

"Yes; that's my business."

"But the people here never heard of such a thing as a woman lawyer, and you might stay here for forty years and never get a case."

"Well, I'll try it forty years, and at the end of that time I may be able to decide whether or not to settle here permanently."

"Gosh! but you've got nerve."

And, laughing at him, she replied:

"Gosh! I need it."

"I reckon you do. But," he added, giving his companion an odd wink, "even if it was common for women to practice at the bar, you are too pretty for a lawyer."

"I have seen better-looking criminals than lawyers," she replied, smiling.

The two men strode away. The report that the new lawyer was a woman was spread about, and so large a crowd was soon collected about her door that the young woman closed her establishment and went to the tavern. The proprietor apologized to her for the ill-behavior of his town, and on the way to her room she halted long enough to say: "Oh, the novelty will wear out by the time I'm elected prosecuting attorney for this district." And the landlord, grinning as he passed on, said he reckoned it "mout" a good while before that time.

The next day was Sunday. The new lawyer went to church, to be stared at and preached at. She sat

far back toward the door, and the hemming and hawing of the minister were eloquent testimony of the an-

noyance he felt at beholding the honored members of his flock twisting their necks to gaze at the astounding novelty, a female barrister. She conducted herself with simple dignity, paying respectful attention to the sermon, and when the services were done she walked straightway to the hotel. About the church door a crowd gathered to discuss her, and in the midst of this idle assembly stood the old justice of the peace. He was more than honestly worried—he was sorely distressed. His importance had long hung upon his reminiscences of the old judge, and by common consent he had taken charge of the great man's memory, sole executor of the estate, bonds, and mortgages of recollection—and thus to be intruded upon was a fetching blow. If the intruder were only a man, come with the defiance of a man's strength, procedure would be clear; but, instead, he was confronted by a young and winsome woman. However, his duty lay before him, like a straight path, and he had but one course to pursue. He would make it so unpleasant for the woman that she would soon vacate the old office, if not the town. The circuit judge was his friend, and that morning they held a long conference; and now, as he stood in the middle of that idle throng, bare of his hat, with the sun beating upon his ancient head, he looked about him until his eyes fell upon the mayor's face, and then he said:

"Speakin' in the nature of a parable, I may say that there is more ways than one of killin' a dog when you ain't got a rope to hang him with. And I want it understood that I don't mean nothin' personal, and, furthermore, that there ain't a man in all this community that's fonder of ladies' society than I am. Do you foller me?" he added, nodding at the mayor.

"Bumpin' up agin your heels," the mayor answered.

"I thought so. No, sir; you might git on a pert hoss and ride all day and not find a man that likes the ladies better than I do. And the fact that I have been married three times is proof of the fact. Now, I know that you gentlemen are all interested in what I'm doin', so I'll keep no secrets from you. I went over to see the circuit judge this mornin', and he tells me that the young woman has got the right to practice in his court, and, worse than that, she can't by any due process of law be got out of the brick office; but there is a recourse. The judge don't like the idea of a woman practicin' law, and—well, in fact, he'll make it interestin' for her from the very jump. Court opens to-morrow mornin', and I want all you gentlemen to be there."

When court assembled the next day Attorney Jonnett, duly enrolled, took her seat with the other lawyers; and when the judge, following the usual polite custom, asked the members of the bar, one by one, if they had any motion to make, A. C. Jonnett,