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For the Year 1888.

Place of Sittings and P. O. Address of Clerks.	Clerks.	Jan.	Mar.	May.	July.	Sep.	Nov.	Hour of Opening
1 Milton	Wm. Panton	27	29	25	13	28	30	10 a.m.
2 Oakville	R. Balmer	11	7	9	11	12	7	10 a.m.
3 Georgetown	L. Grant	17	13	15	4	15	13	9.30 a.m
4 Acton	J. Matthews	19	15	17	"	20	15	10 a.m.
5 Campbellville	S. R. Lister	6	2	4	"	7	2	9-30 "
6 Burlington	G. C. Bastedo	10	6	8	10	11	6	11 "

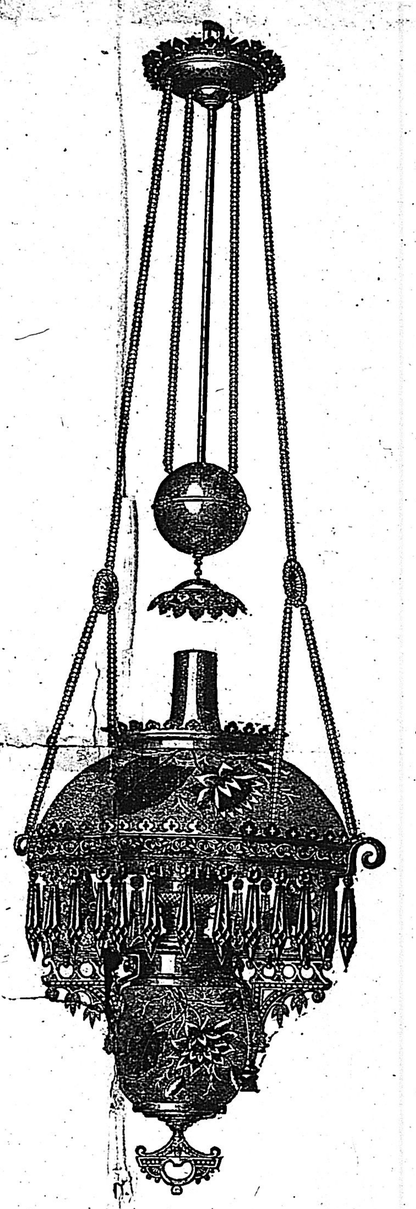
General Sessions of the Peace and County Court Sittings, with or without Jury. Tuesday 12th June, and 11th December, at 10 a.m.

County Court Sittings, without Jury, Tuesday, 3rd April, and 2nd October, at 10 a. m.

County Court Sittings—Formerly Terms—Monday, 2nd January, 2nd April, 2nd July, and 1st October at 10 a.m.

Audit of Criminal Justice Accounts—Tuesday, 3rd January, 3rd April, 3rd July & 2nd October.

By order, JOHN DEWAR, Clerk of the Peace.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ADOPTED DAUGHTER

BY ELIZA A. DUPUY,

AUTHOR OF "THE LOVE HER FORGETS," "PASSION AND PRIDE," ETC., ETC.

Bligh saw her change of expression, and rightly interpreted it.

"You are trying to keep something back from me, Nelly. I think I can guess what it is. Your mother has found some one else to console her for my desertion. After a certain time had elapsed she had the right to take another husband, and if it is so I shall not complain. Having found you I do not intend to lose sight of you again; but nothing would tempt me to seek the woman who made our home an inferno by the unbridled license of her temper and her tongue. I need not tell you what they are if you have grown up under her fiery rule."

"I am glad that you take it in this way, for it is true that my mother has married again. Her second husband is a man of strange temper, and to some extent she stands in awe of him; but as you say, I have good cause to remember how I was dragged up, till Mr. Ford took pity on me and sent me off to school."

"He must have had some purpose in educating you, for Stephen Ford never did an unselfish thing in his life. Have you an idea of what it was, Nelly?"

At this question she firmly closed her lips, and shook her head; and all Bligh's efforts to win a reply from her which would compromise Stephen Ford in any way were vain.

Trusting to time and better knowledge of himself to induce her to speak on this subject, Bligh set it aside for the present, and seriously said:

"Silas Ford has probably told you that you are to visit the lawyer who has charge of the settlement of the Ross estate. At ten to-morrow he is to take you to Mr. Pagand's, but, Nelly, you must not go. You will be arrested as a party to a great fraud, if you appear before Pagand as Cora Ross. He has proof that the heiress is living, and that both the Fords know that to be so when they concocted this scheme to defraud her."

Elfie wrung her hands, and burst into tears.

"What shall I do? What can I do to escape from the consequences of my own folly? Mr. Ford will never allow me to evade going with him to-morrow."

"Perhaps not, if he possessed the power to compel you to obey him. But his day is over with you, and mine has arisen. You must come with me to-night, and I will find a place of safety for you. I cannot leave you under the influence of Silas Ford. He will use you for his own purposes, let the consequences to yourself be what they may."

"O! I dare not—I dare not try to get away from him! I don't know you—you may not be my father, after all, and you may have your own purposes to answer by deceiving me."

Bligh removed his false beard, lifted his hat, together with the gray wig he had assumed, and bending forward till the light of the moon fell upon his face, said:

"Look at me, Nellie, and see if you can recall no memory of the father you once loved and clung to with childish fondness. I swear to you that I am no impostor, and that the single aim I had in view in seeking this interview is to save you from the danger into which you are rushing. You must accept my protection, child, for there is no safety for you if you are left to be guided by Silas Ford."

Elfie looked into the dark face, wearing an expression of yearning tenderness which had once been so familiar to her childish eyes, and some chord in her memory was aroused. A strange thrill trembled through her frame, and half reluctantly she said:

"You may be my father. I have a confused recollection of a face as dark as yours which always looked kindly on me when I was a little thing. But you have no right over me now. You forfeited that when you left me to be dealt with by my mother as she chose. I have had a hard life with her, and Mr. Ford is the only one who has cared to make my lot better. He will protect me even from his brother Silas, if there comes a necessity for it."

"But, Nellie, the time is coming when Stephen Ford will not be able to protect himself. Detectives are watching him now, for it is believed that he is the head of a dangerous band of counterfeiters, and that his operations are carried on upon that very island of which you have spoken."

She started so violently at this that Bligh felt certain that, if he could win it from her, she could put into his hands the clew he had so anxiously sought for. She did not speak, and he went on:

"You do not know why you were educated by Ford, but I can enlighten you. He meant to make you one of his numerous agents for disseminating his false money. The more intelligent you were, the more likely to succeed in serving him well."

"If I thought that," said Elfie, resentfully, "I would cease to feel under any obligations to him. If Mr. Ford deals in false money he has never enlightened me. The life at Flath Innis is quiet and dull enough, and he seldom comes there. I don't know why you should suspect him of such baseness as that."

"Because I know him a great deal better than you do, though I have not seen him for years. It is at his command that you have been brought here to pass yourself off as Cora Ross, and when the plot fails, as fail it will, Stephen Ford will be quite capable of leaving you to bear the consequences of the wrong-doing that must bear most bitter fruit for you."

Elfie's resolution began to falter, though she was firmly determined to betray nothing which could lead to danger to those on the island. She knew perfectly well what was carried on there, and could have shown the secret entrance to the vaults beneath the old church, but she said to herself that nothing should tempt her to point out the way to them to any one—not even to the father she began to believe she had better trust herself to in this dismal crisis of her life.

After a long pause, she said:

"If I agree to go with you, how are you to keep me where Mr. Ford cannot find me?"

"You may trust me to care for your safety, my own dear, honest little girl, for such I am sure you are."

Elfie shook her head doubtfully.

"I don't know. I have not been taught much about right and wrong, and when I agreed to come here on this errand I thought only of the good that was to come to myself by doing as I was bidden. After what you have told me, I must go with you. There is no other course left open to me."

"That is right, my dear. At last you see things in their proper light. Let us settle now how you are to join me in this garden to-night. I will await you here, and you must come to me before daylight. I will find means to take you to a place of safety where Silas Ford could not find you, even if he was allowed time to search for you. He will have his hands full taking care of himself."

After arranging with her how she was to escape from Ford's surveillance, the two separated, and Elfie went back to the house, feeling as if the very foundations of the earth were giving way beneath her feet.

CHAPTER XXIX.

OVERHEARD—THE RAGE OF SILAS—ELFIE BORNE AWAY.

A short time after Elfie left the gallery for the promenade, which had such momentous results, Ford came out in search of her. Finding that she was not among the ladies assembled there, he turned in the direction of her room, pleased that she had retreated to it, as he wished to give her minute instructions as to her statements when she was confronted with Mr. Pagand on the following morning. He lingered a few moments, looking out on the river and the lowlands lying on the opposite shore, and when he turned into the narrow hall which led toward the apartment of Elfie, he heard a complaining voice say:

"Let go my arm, mammy; I am going to mamma, and I only went out to take a little walk in the garden with Miss Ross. I won't be dragged along this way. Let me go or I'll screech."

"Scritch, will you? Jest you try it, Miss Phemy, and see what yer mar'll say; dat's all."

Ford had left stringent orders with Florine not to lose sight of her young lady, and by no means to allow her to walk out with any one, and he became furious in a moment at the thought that his commands had been disregarded. A small room adjoining that of Elfie had been secured for the woman, and striding toward it he knocked sharply on the door.

Florine had met at supper with a waiter who spoke her own beloved language, and she had been beguiled into lingering longer over her evening meal than was necessary. When she finally went in search of her temporary charge she found, to her dismay, that she had disappeared from the gallery. She hastened at once to Elfie's room, hoping to find her there; but it was empty, and she was about to go in search of her, when the sharp knock of Ford startled her, and the sound of his voice, as he called her name, showed her that he was angry.

She came out to meet him, looking pale and anxious, but composedly said:

"Nothing is wrong, Mr. Fletcher. Miss Cora is tired, that is all, and she has retired."

In a sibilant whisper he said:

"Do not attempt to lie to me, Florine. The girl is in the garden, I know. Go down and find her at once, and tell her that I am waiting to speak with her. If this occurs again it will be the worse for you, I can tell you."

There was menace in his tone, and the woman went on her errand crestfallen, without daring to utter a word in excuse for her neglect.

Florine walked through the solitary paths winding through the shrubbery, for, however beautiful the night, those familiar with the climate preferred the shelter of the open galleries to the dew-laden air without. She presently heard the sound of voices, and stealthily pursuing her way, came by a lateral path upon the rear of the rustic bower to which Bligh had taken his daughter.

Elfie was speaking at the moment, and, anxious to discover whom she had found to converse with, and what she would be imprudent enough to say, Florine crouched down behind the thick shrubs which grew profusely around, and listened in terror to the conversation which passed between the long-severed father and daughter.

When it was over, and Elfie had gone away, Florine noiselessly arose and swiftly followed on her steps, leaving Bligh alone with his cigar and his own thoughts, too much occupied with what had just passed to note the slight rustling movement of the shrubbery made by the woman's departure.

Florine watched the retreating figure of Elfie till she saw her safely on the gallery, seated at the farthest end toward the river. Then she sped toward the apartment of Ford, which was on the opposite side of the corridor on which her own room opened. She knew that he would be waiting there for her, and after striking her fingers in a peculiar manner on the door, she entered, looking so pale and scared that he exclaimed:

"What—what makes you show the white feather like that? What has happened? Has that creature shown you that she is not to be trusted? I told you all along to keep a sharp eye on her; she's a fool in some things, and she's afraid of what is to be done to-morrow; as if it is not the 'first step that costs,' as your people pithily say."

Florine recovered breath and courage to say:

"The game is up, Silas. It has been skeelfully played, as far as you could see, but you dood not know that the young mademoiselle what owns the money ees nevaire dead. She ees living, and Mees Elfie knows it too. She won't not do what she was brought here for."

Silas uttered a terrible oath, and his eyes glared furiously at the speaker.

"What do you mean, woman? Can't you speak intelligibly? What scrape has that infernal imbecile been trying to get me into? I would like to see her refuse to do my bidding, let it be what it may. Speak to the point if you can."

"She have found somebody to stand between you and her; the man said he was her father," said Florine sullenly, for she was offended at the tone assumed by Ford. "The plot was a very good one, but it won't work with dat monsieur ready to explode the affair."

Silas was both exasperated and alarmed, but he knew that with this woman he had to deal with he must put some constraint upon his temper. He more calmly said:

"You are enough to provoke a saint, Florine, breaking in on one in such a melodramatic manner, and half-way telling a story that is of such importance to me. Come now. Begin at the beginning and let me know what you have actually seen and heard since you went in search of Elfie."

Mollified in some degree, Florine, whose memory was acute enough, repeated not only the substance of what had passed between Bligh and his daughter, but gave him the words almost as they had been spoken.

Silas listened in consternation. Not only was the plot exploded, but he saw plainly that he was in danger himself unless he fled from the vicinity of the man who, he at once knew, had followed him as a detective, and was ready to bring him to account, not only for the fraud he had come hither to accomplish, but for other sins for which he had enjoyed immunity for many years.

But he was not the man to lose his presence of mind in a moment of danger. After reflecting a few moments he decisively said:

"There is but one thing left for us to do. We must get away from here as speedily as possible, and take that girl with us. She shall not fall into the hands of Melchoir Bligh, to be used against my brother and myself. He would force her to tell him the secrets of Flath Innis, and it is more important to keep them than to gain this fortune. There are more ways than one to attain the last end, and Stephen is shrewd enough to try them successfully."

"But who ees thees Melchoir you talk about? Ees he really Mees Elfie's father?"

"He says he is, and I can see no reason why he should wish to burden himself with such an incorrigible little idiot if he is not. I knew Elfie's father when we were both boys, and we had no love for each other then. I suppose he has followed me on account of some old grudge. It seems that he has changed his calling from that of a wandering minstrel to become a detective. Ah, well! it is his turn now, but it shall go hard with me if I don't pay him back for this. I can do it through his daughter, if in no other way. She shall go back with me to Flath Innis, and never have a chance to leave there again as long as she lives. That will punish her, and him, too, for I have heard that he spent years of his life trying to find her when his Xantippe ran away from him, taking his child with her. But we have no time to lose in talking, Florine. We must be up and doing. I can't risk being put in the calaboose in New Orleans at this season of the year. I should die of heat and mosquitoes, even if yellow fever did not use me up."

"But how are we to get away without that dreadful man finding out that we are running off?"

"I think I can manage that. A Memphis packet is to land here to-night for a lot of passengers who were afraid to go to the city to get on her. We can mingle with them easily enough, and trust to getting accommodations after we get on board."

"But will Mees go without a fuss? She have promised to go with the strange man, you know."

Silas grimly said:

"I shall allow her no choice. But I think I can find a way to induce her to go with me with her own consent. I am going to her room now, to await her appearance there. Do you go and tell her that I wish to speak with her."

Elfie's room opened on the end of the gallery next to the town, and Ford crossed the hall and took possession of the most comfortable seat in it. She had expected to see him again before retiring for the night, but the summons to his presence before she had recovered from the agitation of the late interview filled her with alarm. Not daring to delay, she arose from her seat and followed Florine to the presence of the man she so deeply dreaded to meet, after what had passed between herself and her father.

Silas greeted her with his blandest smile, and as soon as the Frenchwoman was gone, said:

"I have good news for you, Elfie, for you may now resume your own name if you choose. I saw how much alarmed you were when I told you of the impending interview between yourself and Mr. Pagand, and fearing that, at the last, you might lose your courage and break down, I went back to him, and by sacrificing half the inheritance insured a compromise. I have made arrangements with him which will enable us to leave this place at once. The sooner we get out of this death-laden air the better, for Carrollton is no longer safe. The fever has extended to this place, and there are several cases in town."

He relied on Elfie's utter ignorance of business affairs to induce her to accept this statement, and she listened, bewildered, but not doubting the truth of his allegations. She faintly asked:

"But how are we to get away, sir? I—I am not afraid to remain here a day or two, and I am tired of travelling on the railroad."

"It will be easy enough to get away, and we are not going the way we came. I cannot think of remaining in this infested atmosphere a moment longer than is necessary. A steamer will be at the landing in less than an hour from this time, and you must be ready to go on board of it with me. We shall go as far as Memphis on her, and from there take the train."

"But—but—this is so sudden, sir, and—"

Her voice died away in an inaudible murmur, for she dared not betray the real ground of her objections to this unexpected removal.

Silas went on in his blandest tones.

"I have been talking with an accomplished Italian musician who is going up on the Halcyon, and he has partly agreed to take you as a pupil. His family live in New York, and if you go with him, you are to board with them. After a year with him, he thinks you will be ready to go to Italy, where he can place you in the best manner for the training you wish to have. What do you think of that now, young lady? You cannot say that I have been unmindful of our compact, though the service I required of you has not been performed."

What, he knew, was attacking Elfie on her weakest side, and he believed that she with him would out would be eagerly accepted at. Nor was he mistaken. With great reluctance had she consented to enter into her father's plans, because she was more afraid of him than she was of Silas Ford, nor did she quite trust the promises he had made.

The arrangement asserted to have been made by Ford seemed to her a certainty, and, after a brief pause, she said, without faltering:

"You are very good to me, sir, and I can hardly find words to thank you. Is it really settled that I am go with this gentleman, and be instructed by him? Excuse me for expressing a doubt, but it seems too good news to be true."

"It is all settled, only needing your consent to ratify the bargain," replied Silas, mendaciously. "I hardly think that will be wanting, eh, Elfie?"

She hesitated a moment before replying. A faint warning came to her that she had better rely on the promises made by her father, but she had so long looked upon Stephen Ford as her best friend and benefactor, that she had recoiled from the thought of joining her fate with that of the man who would, in all probability, attempt to make her betray all she knew concerning him for the purpose of bringing him to disgrace and punishment.

"I will never do that," she vowed to herself, "and my father will probably make it the condition on which his pledge will be kept. This is certain—and I will accept it."

Turning to the tempter, she said:

"Of course, there can be no hesitation on my part as to accepting the arrangement you have made for me, sir. I cannot tell you how grateful I am. But—but how are we to get from here without—"

Elfie paused, frightened at what she had been about to betray.

Ford frowned slightly, and with a strange laugh, said:

"Without being interfered with, you were about to say. I understand, you have been talking to a fellow who wished to lure you away from me under the pretense of being your father. That is all bosh, Elfie, for Bligh is dead years ago. I know that positively, and this man is only a clever detective who has followed me up, believing me to have some connection with Flath Innis affairs. You know best how far you dare compromise the safety of those who live on the island. Remember that your own mother is among them, and that her husband is the head workman there."

Elfie sat down, feeling faint and sick. With great effort, she asked:

"How did you know that I have spoken with any one, sir?"

"Never mind about that. I know it, and that is enough. I excuse you for falling into the snare the man prepared for you, but this treachery must be the last you attempt against us, Elfie. You have sense enough to understand a warning like this, so we need say nothing more on this subject. As to getting away, that is easily managed. A crowd of people are going off on the boat, and we can mingle among them without being observed by your new friend. I will go now and you can change your dress—put a thick veil over your face, and trust the rest to me."

Elfie, bewildered and helpless, saw no other resource but to obey, and when Ford left the room, and Florine came in to assist her in her preparation for departure, she passively submitted to be dictated to by the waiting woman, who had laid aside much of the respect with which she had hitherto treated her, now that the assumed character was to be dropped.

With many palpitations of the poor, unquiet heart within her, she found herself, at the end of an hour, standing on the wide platform built over the bank of the river for the landing of freight, clinging to the arm of Silas Ford as if he were her only stay and support in the world. The steamer was coming up to the wharf, and the men on board held the gangway ready to drop down as she ceased to move, while the wild eldritch shriek of the whistle made night hideous by its ear piercing sounds.

The baggage was hurried on board, the struggling mass of passengers followed as quickly as possible, and in the thickest of the crowd was Silas and his two companions.

Bligh had remained in his rustic retreat thinking over the scene which had passed, and arranging his plans for Elfie's safety, till the sound of the steam whistle from the approaching boat aroused him. He arose then, resumed his wig and beard, and moved leisurely toward the house.

From the end of the gallery he could see all that was going on near the bank of the river, and he looked in unconscious that he was interested in any of the passengers who had left the house till he heard a childish voice say in loud, clear tones:

"Oh, mamma, just think that big man got scared about the river, and he has taken that pretty Miss Ross away. I saw her as she went down just now."

The rebellious Phemy was the speaker, and she was looking out of an upper window which commanded a view of the river.

The words had scarcely passed the child's lips when a dark figure leaped over the railing of the lower gallery, and ran, with swift steps, toward the river. What he meant to do when he got there was hardly clear to Bligh, but on one thing he was determined—that, if he could prevent it, his daughter should not be stolen from him in this manner. He bitterly said to himself:

"The girl has betrayed me, and shown Silas Ford the danger he is in. How could she, how could she! when so much was at stake for herself? She evidently did not like the idea of accepting me for a father, but I thought she would be silent, and come with me for her own sake. Badly as she has treated me I must save from that man my own little Nelly, who was once so fond of me."

He rushed over the intervening space gained the platform, and pushed his way through the throng of idlers attracted to the spot; for it was yet early in the night.

Breathless from the effort he had made, he reached the point he had aimed at just as the gangway was lifted and with a loud roaring of steam and clanging of bells, the Halcyon moved on her way, regardless of the frantic efforts of a man the clerk supposed to be a belated passenger to arrest her progress. He would have made an effort to jump on board had he not been held back by others, for the first motion of the paddle-wheels had taken the steamer many feet from the landing, and a plunge into that swift stream they knew, would be death even to a strong swimmer.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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