

The Albany Register.

VOLUME VI.

ALBANY, OREGON, JUNE 27, 1874.

NO. 42.

Miscellaneous.

The Board Fence.

BY RUTH CHESTERFIELD.

"Shoo, shoo! Get home, you plaguy critters!" cried Mr. Babcock, waving his arms as he chased a dozen sheep and lambs through a gap in the fence. It was a wooden fence, and when he had succeeded in driving the animals the other side of it, he lifted it from its reclining position and propped it up with stakes. This was an operation he had found himself obliged to repeat many times in the course of the season, and not only of that season, but of several previous seasons. Yet Mr. Babcock was neither slack nor thrifless; in fact, he rather prided himself on the orderly appearance of his farm, and not without reason. How then shall we account for his negligence in this particular instance?

The truth was that this fence formed the boundary line between his estate and that of Mr. Small; and three generations of men who owned these estates had been unable to decide to whom it belonged to rebuild and keep it in repair. If the owners had chanced to be men of peaceable dispositions, they had compromised the matter and avoided a quarrel; but, on the contrary, they belonged to that much larger class who would sooner sacrifice their own comfort and convenience than their so-called rights, this fence had been a source of unending bickerings and strife. And of this class were the present owners. Again and again they had consulted their respective lawyers on the subject, and dragged from their hiding-places musty old deeds and records, but always with the same result.

"I say it belongs to you to keep it in repair; that's as plain as a pike-staff," Mr. Babcock would say.

"And I say it belongs to you—any fool might see that," Mr. Small would reply, and then high words would follow, and they would part in anger, more determined and obstinate than ever. The lawyers' fees and the loss by damages from each other's cattle had already amounted to a sum sufficient to have built a fence round their entire estates, but what was that compared to the satisfaction of having their own way?

There were not wanting in the neighborhood peace-makers who would gladly have settled the affair by arbitration; but to this neither of the belligerents would listen for a moment. At last one day, Miss Letitia Gill, a woman much respected in the village, and of some weight as a land-owner and taxpayer, sent for Mr. Babcock to come and see her on business; a summons which he made haste to obey, as how could he do otherwise where a lady was concerned? Miss Letitia sat at the window sewing up a seam, but she dropped her work and took off her spectacles when Mr. Babcock made his appearance.

"So you got my message; thank you for coming, I'm sure. Sit down, do. I suppose my man Isaac told you I wanted to consult you on a matter of business—a matter of equity, I may say. It can't be expected that we women folks should be the best judges about such things, you know; there's Isaac, to be sure, but then he lives on the place, and may be he wouldn't be exactly impartial in his judgment about our affairs."

"Jes' so," said Mr. Babcock. "Well, the state of the case is this: When Isaac came up from the long meadow to dinner—they're mowing the meadow to-day, and

an uncommonly good yield there is—when he came up to dinner he found that certain stray cows had broken into the vegetable garden."

"He did, hey?"
"You can't see the riot they made. I declare Isaac was almost ready to use profane language. I'm not sure that he didn't say 'deuce,' and I'm certain he did say 'darn'; and after all, I couldn't feel to reproach him very severely, for the pains he has taken with that garden is something amazing; working in it, Mr. Babcock, early and late, weeding, and digging, and watering; and now to see it all torn and trampled so that you wouldn't know which was beets and which was cucumbers; it's enough to rouse anybody's temper."

"It is so," said Mr. Babcock.
"And that isn't all, for by the looks of things they must have been rampaging a full hour in the orchard and clover-field before they got into the garden. Just you come and see," and putting on her sunbonnet, Miss Letitia showed Mr. Babcock over the damaged precinct.

"You don't happen to know whose animals did the mischief?" said Mr. Babcock.

"Well, I didn't observe them in particular myself, but Isaac said there was one with a peculiar white mark, something like a cross, on her haunch."

"Why, that's Small's old Brindle," cried Mr. Babcock. "I know the mark as well as I know the nose on my face. She had balls on her horns, didn't she?"

"Yes, so Isaac said."

"And a kind of hump on her back?"

"A perfect dromedary," said Miss Letitia. "I noticed that myself."

"They were Small's cows—no doubt about it at all," said Mr. Babcock, rubbing his hands. "No sheep with them, hey?"

"Well, now I think of it, there were sheep; they ran away as soon as they saw Isaac. Yes, certainly there were sheep," said Miss Letitia.

"I knew it—they always go with the cows; and what you wish of me—"

"Is to fix the damages," said Miss Letitia. "As I said before, wome' folk are no judges about such matters."

Mr. Babcock meditated a moment, and then said—

"Well, I wouldn't take a cent less than seventy-five dollars, if I were you—not a cent."

"Seventy-five dollars! Isn't that a good deal, Mr. Babcock? You know I don't wish to be hard on the poor man; all I want is a fair compensation for the mischief done."

"Seventy-five dollars is fair, ma'am—in fact, I may say it's low; I wouldn't have a herd of cattle and sheep tramping through my premises in that way for a hundred."

"There's one thing I forgot to state: the orchard gate was open or they couldn't have got in; that may make a difference."

"Not a bit, not a bit. You'd a right to have your gate open, but Small's cows had no right to run loose. I hope Isaac drove 'em all to pound, didn't he?"

"I heard him say he'd shunt 'em up somewhere, and didn't mean to let 'em out till the owner calls for 'em. But, Mr. Babcock, what if he should refuse to pay the damages? I should hate to go to law about it."

"He won't refuse; if he does, keep the critters till he will pay. As to law, I guess he's had about enough of that."

"I'm sure I thank you for your advice," said Miss Letitia, "and I

mean to act upon it to the very letter."

And Mr. Babcock took his leave with a very happy expression of countenance.

Scarcely was he out of sight when Miss Letitia sent a summons for Mr. Small, which he obeyed as promptly as his neighbor had done.

She made to him precisely the same statement she had made to Mr. Babcock, showed him the injured property, and asked him to fix damages.

It was remarkable that before he did this, he should ask the same question Mr. Babcock had asked, namely, whether she had any suspicion to whom the animals belonged.

"Well, one of them I observed had a terribly crooked horn."

"Precisely; it's Babcock's heifer. I should know her among a thousand. She was black and white, wasn't she?"

"Well, now I think of it she was; one seldom sees so clear a black and white on a cow."

"To be sure, they're Babcock's animals, fast enough. Well, let me see, what you want is just about a fair estimate, I suppose?"

"Certainly."

"Well, I should say ninety dollars was as low as he ought to be allowed to get off with."

"O, but I fear that will seem as if I meant to take advantage. Suppose we call it—say seventy-five?"

"Just as you please, of course; but hang'd if I'd let him off for less than a hundred, if 'twas my case."

"And if he refuses to pay?"

"Why, keep his animals till he comes round, that's all."

"But there's one thing I neglected to mention: our gate was standing open; that may alter the case."

"Not at all; there's no law against your keeping your gate open; there is against stray animals."

"Very well; thank you for your advice," said Miss Letitia; and Mr. Small departed with as smiling a countenance as Mr. Babcock had worn.

But at milking-time that night he made a strange discovery; old Brindle was missing!

At about the same hour Mr. Babcock made a similar discovery; the black and white heifer was nowhere to be found!

A horrible suspicion seized them both—a suspicion which they would not have made known to each other for the world.

They waited till it was dark, and then Mr. Babcock stole round to Miss Letitia's, and meekly asked leave to look at the animals which had committed the trespass. He would have done it without asking leave, only that thrifty Miss Letitia always locked her barn doors at night.

While he stood looking over into the pen where the cows were confined, and trying to negotiate with Miss Letitia for the release of the heifer, along came Mr. Small in quest of Brindle. The two men stared at each other for an instant in blank dismay, then hung their heads in confusion. It was useless to assert that the damages were too high, for had they not fixed them themselves? It was useless to plead that Miss Letitia was in a manner responsible for what had happened, on account of the open gate, for had they not assured her that circumstances did not affect the case. It was useless to say that she had no right to keep the cows in custody, for had they not counseled her to do so? As to going to law about it, would they not thus become the sport of the whole town?

"He that diggeth a pit, he himself shall fall into it," said Miss Letitia, who read what was passing

in their minds as well as if they had spoken, for the light of Isaac's lantern fell full on their faces. "However, I don't wish to be hard upon you, and on one condition I will free the cows and forgive you the debt."

"What is that?" Both looked the question, but did not ask it.

"The condition is that you promise to put a good new fence in place of the old one that separates your estate, dividing the cost between you, and that henceforth you will live peaceably together as far as in you lies. Do you promise?"

"Yes," muttered both, in a voice scarcely audible.

"Make hands upon it, then," said Miss Letitia.

They did so.

"Now let the cows out, Isaac; it's time they were milked," said she. And the two men went away driving their animals before them, with a shamefaced air greatly in contrast to the look of triumph with which they had last quitted her presence.

The fence was built, and the strife ceased when the cause was removed, but it was long before Miss Letitia's part of the affair came to the public ear; for she herself maintained a strict silence concerning it, and enjoined the same upon her man-servant Isaac.—*Youth's Companion.*

The Effect of Good Acting.

"When I was a poor girl," relates Mrs. Scott Siddons, the actress, "working very hard for thirty shillings a week, I went down to Liverpool during the holidays, where I was kindly received. I was to perform in a new piece—something like those pretty little affecting dramas they get up now at the minor theatres—and in my character I represented a poor, friendless orphan girl, reduced to the most wretched poverty. A heartless tradesman prosecutes the sad heroine for a heavy debt, and insists on putting her in prison unless some one will be bail for her. The girl replies, 'Then I have no hope—I have not a friend in the world!' 'What! will no one be bail for you to save you from prison?' asks the stern creditor. 'I have told you I have not a friend on earth,' was my reply. But just as I was uttering the words I saw a sailor in the upper gallery springing over the railing, letting himself down from one tier to another, until he bounded clear over the orchestra and foot-lights, and placed himself beside me in a moment. 'Yes, you shall have one friend, at least, my poor young woman!' said he, with the greatest expression in his honest, sunburnt countenance. 'I will go bail for you to any amount! And as for you, turning to the frightened actor, 'if you don't bear a hand and shift your moorings, you lubber, it will be the worse for you when I come athwart your bows.' Every creature in the house rose; the uproar was perfectly indescribable—peals of laughter, screams of terror, cheers from his tawny messmates in the gallery, preparatory scraping of violins in the orchestra; and amid the universal din there stood the unconscious cause of it sheltering me, the poor distressed young woman, and breathing defiance and destruction against my music prosecutor. He was only persuaded to relinquish his care of me by the manager's pretending to arrive and rescue me with a profusion of theatrical bank notes."

Lady London's Undying Hate.

In the will of the Countess of London, who died in England recently, was found a clause directing that her right hand be cut off and buried in the park at Castle Dennington, at the bend of the hill to the Trent, with a small cross over it, bearing the motto, "I hyde my tyme." The explanation of this singular request shows that the Countess, who had been a life-long enemy of Queen Victoria, desired to carry her implacable hatred of Victoria beyond the grave. The place of burial mentioned overlooks one of the Queen's country seats. The skeleton hand with its threatening epitaph was meant to point its slow unwavering finger at the Queen, reminding her of the injustice done long years ago to a younger sister of the Countess. In the early queenhood of Victoria the sister mentioned was a maid of honor. Gay and thoughtless, the young girl had a freedom of manner which gave the gossips of the day an opportunity, all too well abused, of blackening her fame, which had been tarnished by no criminal acts of hers. The Queen harkened to the slander, and banished the beautiful but indiscreet girl from her household. The falsity of the scandal was shown, but not until the poor, dishonored maid of honor had died of a broken heart. The Countess of London blamed the Queen for her sister's untimely fate, and determined to revenge that sister's wrongs. Never after did she appear at court, and upon every royal fete day kept closely immured. Her post-mortem pursuit of the Queen is ghastly but impotent.

Queen Victoria Indorses Mr. Sartoris.

The Washington correspondent of the *N. Y. Journal of Commerce* writes:

"Mr. Sartoris is a descendant of the Huguenot refugees. His father, a conservative and one of the best known members of the Carlton Club, is a prominent merchant, and does a large East Indian business. His uncle, Mr. Samuda, M. P., also of the Huguenot refugees, is known as the largest ship builder on the Thames, and an authority in the navy debates in Parliament. It is not generally known that Queen Victoria, as soon as she heard of the proposed marriage, made inquiries regarding Mr. Sartoris, and wrote a letter to the President in which she confidently indorsed him. The letter probably arose from the sincere personal attachment which the Queen felt toward Miss Grant, and the esteem she felt for the President of this republic in his official capacity. It is hinted by those cognizant of the situation that the royal heart will be moved to some especial mark of approbation in connection with this marriage. It is believed among Englishmen who know, or affect to know, a little about the court, that the Queen will invite the couple to visit Windsor Castle and confer some title of nobility upon the bridegroom. There is a confident belief that President Grant will visit Europe after his presidential term; and the idea of tendering him the freedom of the City in such event is already favorably talked of in the London clubs."