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IN A MOOTED GROVE

A Tangle That Was Settled In Court and Then Out of Court.

By RICHARD BARKER SMELTON. (Copyright, 1908, by Associated Literary Press.)

"Well," said Hillis shortly to the gray haired lawyer, who seemed rather bored with the whole matter, "what do you advise?"

"The attorney grinned unpleasantly. "Rip up this fence and set it where it belongs—200 yards to the south," said he. "Your deed reads perfectly clear. This fence belongs to the other side of the grove. The grove is yours. You've paid for it."

Hillis frowned. "I hate trouble," he observed. "I'm a newcomer here. I don't want to start on my career as owner of this place by antagonizing people."

"Then let it go," said the other disgustedly. "Let 'em put their fences on to your land as much as you please. In a little while, let 'em once get the



"OH!" SHE SAID, LOOKING UP IN EMBARRASSMENT, "OH!"

idea you're an easy mark, and they'll encroach on you right and left." Hillis straightened himself, and his eyes flashed.

"If it's a matter of precedent"—he began.

"It is," said the lawyer laconically. "I know the crowd round here."

"Very well, then," said Hillis; "I'll have the gardener and some of the men fix this matter up in short order. Back goes the fence where it belongs. Two hundred yards to the south, you say? Good! I'll see it goes there."

"A man may just as well stand up for his rights," the lawyer remarked, "and in this vicinity I know perfectly well what I'm saying when I advise you to keep 'em off your toes at the outset."

Hillis turned on his heel and made his way back toward the house, the lawyer following.

Twenty minutes later Tim, the gardener, was tearing down the offending fence, while two helpers he had inveigled into service, were digging post holes for its resetting on the other side of the grove.

But next morning Tim, with a lugubrious expression on his homely face, appeared before Hillis, who was lounging in the library of the house he had recently purchased.

"The fence is back, sir," he began—"back just where it was before we tore it down."

"Then take it down once more and set it the other side of the grove," Hillis commanded.

All the morning Tim labored again with his helpers, but at dusk Hillis, walking down to inspect the job, found the fence in its original position.

"H'm!" he mused. "We'll take a hand in this thing personally, I think. Ho, Tim!"

Tim, who was coming through the bushes, hastened his steps.

"You see how it is," said Hillis to his gardener. "Call the men and move it once more. I shall keep an eye on it after you move it this time."

Once again the fence came down and went up again farther to the south. Darkness came on, and Tim and the men worked by the light of lanterns. When the work was done Hillis said curtly:

"I'll stay here now until this matter is settled one way or the other. Bring me down a bite to eat, Tim."

Tim brought the lunch from the house, and Hillis settled himself with his back against a pine to keep his vigil at the fence.

It was nearing 11 o'clock when he heard footsteps and low voices. He arose and strode to the fence. Two men armed with shovels and saws were already starting in on it.

"That fence stays just where it is this time," said Hillis quietly.

"Does it, indeed?" said a quiet voice, and out of the darkness stepped a young woman.

"You have no right to this grove," said the girl. "You, I presume, are Mr. Hillis, who has bought the Armitage place?"

"I am," said Hillis.

"This grove is ours," she went on. "You are Miss Gray?" Hillis asked.

The girl nodded.

"Permit me to say I am equally sure

it is mine," said he. "I have not moved the fence without being very sure of my position."

The girl bit her lips. "If my men move it, what will you do?"

"They aren't going to move it, Miss Gray," said Hillis very quietly.

"There is law in the land. We shall see," she replied. "I am not going to let the men make any trouble now, but the courts shall decide it."

She moved away, followed by the two men, who were muttering angrily.

But Hillis heard nothing more of the fence save a word from his attorney, who informed him the Grays had taken the matter to court and through his own alertness they had lost their case. Hillis grinned and was relieved that the matter was settled.

Some weeks later he strolled down to the mooted grove. He was sitting on a stump when he heard a strange sound to the left—the sound as of some one sobbing. He arose and moved softly in that direction. There, seated on a fallen pine, her face covered with her hands, was Miss Gray.

"Oh!" she said, looking up in embarrassment. "Oh!"

She jumped to her feet and started to move away.

"Miss Gray, just a moment, please," said Hillis, stepping quickly to her side.

Something in his voice made her halt her footsteps, even against her will.

She faced him defiantly. "You'll pardon my trespassing, I trust," she said slowly. "But this grove is very much to me—and since we lost it—"

"I didn't understand about it," Hillis said contritely, but the girl was gone. Next evening, after a busy day at the county seat, Hillis drove over to the Grays.

He had a tactful little speech all prepared, but somehow, face to face with the girl, the speech took sudden wings.

"I have brought you the deed to that grove," he broke out awkwardly, "and now you must take it and put your fence where it was originally," he hurried on.

"Indeed not," said she. "I couldn't possibly do that. The grove is yours. We are quite wrong in the matter."

Long did Hillis argue, but the girl was obdurate. He walked homeward feeling decidedly like a cad.

However, Hillis was a persistent mortal, and thereafter he went daily to the Grays', ostensibly to argue with the girl about accepting the grove, but in reality he knew it was something utterly different that took him on his daily errand.

"Now, why," said the girl one evening after some two weeks of this—"why should you be so anxious to give up that grove when you were so anxious to keep it in the first place?"

"Well," said Hillis, with an uneasy laugh, "there's a Scriptural injunction, you know, about loving your neighbor. I believe we are instructed to love our neighbor as ourself. Now, I have gone that injunction one better. I—I love my neighbor, a certain one of my neighbors, very much better than I do myself or anything else in the world. I—I—hang it—I'm rather awkward about saying things, but perhaps you understand."

Her hand rested lightly on his arm, and she was smiling up at him radiantly.

"I'll take the grove now," she laughed softly.

She Finds a Flat.

"Well," said Polly, smiling sweetly as she poured the tea, "I saw a perfectly lovely flat this morning!"

"Oh, nonsense, Polly," said I; "we're not going to move this year. I admit this place isn't any too comfortable, and the wall paper in the parlor is the limit, but if we moved the chances are we wouldn't get anything better. All moving would mean would be \$47 to a lot of furniture breakers to come in here and smash all our bric-a-brac and make dents in the top of the piano, to say nothing of our having to break in a new janitor and tip a lot of new elevator boys. We stay where we are."

"I've taken it, too," said Polly, apparently paying not the least attention to my observations, "on a long lease."

"What?" I cried indignantly. "Taken a flat on a long lease without consulting me?"

"You asked me to, dear," said Polly demurely.

"I?" I roared.

"Yes, and I told you that in spite of all your faults I loved you still!" said Polly, "and so I took you for life—just the dearest old flat there ever was!"—New York Times.

When Knowledge Is Valuable.

The faculty of having one's mind pigeonholed is of great value. Some people have their mental bookcases and storerooms piled up with masses of material, all valuable perhaps in their way, but jumbled up and piled together so that when any one thing is wanted it is not to be had without overhauling ten times as much other material, which, however valuable it may be in itself, has no particular use at the moment of search. Other people can lay their mental hands on any particular fact or fancy at a moment's notice and can keep on pulling out other facts and fancies of the same general character until they have told or found all they know. There is such a thing as an embarrassment of riches in one's mental treasury as well as in matters material.—Exchange.

Favorites.

"What are you going to put in there?" asked his wife.

"Peas, dear," replied the man with the trowel. "Say, if you're going into the house, bring out a can with you. You know—the kind we had for dinner yesterday!"—Puck.



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