

The Chariton Leader, Chariton, Iowa
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'SHE WAS THE BEST MAN'

An Authentic Incident of Travel in the South-West.....

A gentleman residing in this city says the Vicksburg Herald, had occasion, a few days since, to take a journey down the river, and several miles back from it, using a saddle horse. Darkness overtook him in a partly-settled district, and as the roads were in a bad condition and the evening looked threatening, he halted before a forlorn looking hut, and asked if he could find lodging.

"I reckon ye mought," replied the long-haired sorrowful-eyed squatter, after hesitating a moment.

The Vicksburger found little to eat, and his horse found still less. The squatter and his wife were all alone, and they had but a few words for the stranger, and scarcely had spoken to each other. When the evening grew old the traveler camped down on the floor, on a blanket, and being very tired he fell asleep while host and hostess were smoking their clay pipes at the other end of the room. He had slept about two hours, when the squatter shook him by the shoulder, and said:

"Stranger I'm powerful sorry to disturb ye, but I want to ax a favor."

"Yes -- yes -- what is it?" inquired the Vicksburger, as he rubbed his eyes, and sat up.

"Ye like to see fa'r play, don't ye, stranger?"

"Yes, of course."

Wall, me'n the old woman can't agree; somehow she's cross and tetchy and I guess I'm a trifle ugly. Leastwise we don't hug up worth old boots. We've fit and fit; I'm old and she's chuck full o' grit, and it's about and even thing!"

"Well, I'm sorry, put in Vicksburger, as the squatter hesitated."

"We've been a talkin' since ye cum, stranger, and we've made up to ask ye to hold the candle and let us go in for a rouser of a fight -- a reg'lar old sockdolager, which shall settle our fuss! If I lick, she'll go; if she licks, I'll travel!"

"I'm sorry if there's any trouble, and I hope you won't fight."

"We've got to do it, stranger," replied the woman. "I won't live with a man who kin lick me, and he's just as high born. Sam's as good as the run 'o men, but he's lazy and sassy, and he wants to wear his hat on his ear!"

"She's right, stranger," said the squatter, "and this cabin can't hold both of us any longer. It's to be a square fight -- no kicking or clubbing and we won't go back on yer decision."

The Vicksburger protested, but the woman placed a lighted candle in his hand and posted him in the door, and man and wife stepped out on the ground.

"Suke, I'm going to wallop ye right smart in just four hoots and a holler!" said the squatter, as he pushed up his sleeves.

"Sam, ye don't weigh 'nuff into three tons!" she replied in a grim voice, and the battle commenced.

The Vicksburger mentally bet twenty to one on the man at the start, but in two minutes he had reduced his odds to ten, and in two minutes more he was betting even. The wife was like a wild-cat,

springing, dodging, striking, and clawing, and pretty soon her husband had to stand on the defensive.

"Look out for the Bengal tiger, Suke!" he warned as he clawed the air.

"I can whip the boots off'n ye, Sam." she replied, and the battle grew fiercer.

One of the woman's sharp nails struck the husband's eye and blinded him for an instant. As he threw up his arms she seized both her hands into his hair, yanked him down, and in another moment had the 'gouge' on him.

"Sam, do ye cave?" she asked as they lay quiet.

"That's the dead word, Suke, and I'm a licked man!" he mournfully answered.

She let him up, and he turned to the Vicksburger and inquired:

"Stranger was it a fa'r fought?"

"I guess it was!"

"Then I travel!"

He entered the hut, put on his coat and hat, took up his rifle, and as he came out he reached his hand to his wife, and said:

"Good-by, Suke! We agreed fa'r and squar, and here I go!" turning to the traveler, then he added:

"Much obleeged, stranger -- ye held the candle plumb fa'r and ye didn't holler for either one of us!"

And he walked down to the fence, leaped over, and was soon lost to sight.

"Good 'nuf on the shoot," mused his wife as she gazed after him, "but his fighting weights is clar run down to nuthin!"