

FORCED TO TAKE LIFE OF PARENT SHALL IT BE MOTHER OR FATHER?

Terrible Alternative That Has Been Presented to Children in Various Parts of the Country---Tragedy Made the Daughter the Instrument of Vengeance---Pistol Duel with Father.



YES, I shot my father; I hoped to kill him," sobbed the boy as he bowed his head in his hands, sitting there in his cell. "I had to do it to save my mother's life. Is he dead?"

The police already have all the evidence they want against Theodore Eller, the 19-year-old boy. They have the revolver with which he put the bullets into the body of his father, John Eller, at their home, 30 Littleton avenue, Newark. They have the boy's confession; they have his word for it that his married sister gave him the pistol to shoot his father.

John Eller did attack his wife just once too often. The moment he came home on that fatal evening he began abusing his helpmeet for 25 years—mother of his six children. He raged up and down the room. The patient wife was silent. When she didn't reply to the man's ravings Eller picked up an iron matchesafe and flung it at her with unerring aim. It struck her full in the forehead; she sank to the floor with a cry of agony.

The boy upstairs heard the cry. Then he heard his father shout out: "I'm going to get my gun and finish you right now!"

In the boy's pocket was the pistol. He remembered the injunction of his older sister, Mrs. Frederick Proster, who had gone out for the evening, as she gave it to him: "Keep this always by you, for you will need it to protect your mother. Don't be afraid to use it if father attacks her again in one of his jealous rages."

Three steps at a time the lad dashed downstairs. As he ran into the room his mother fell upon him.

"Theodore, Theodore!" she screamed, "save me, save me!"

She flung her arms around him. He put one arm around her and faced his father, who came charging on at the two of them.

"I'll kill you both!" yelled the man.

"Shoot, shoot, if you must; save our lives!" screamed Mrs. Eller.

Mother's Life, or Father's.

For an answer Theodore leveled the pistol at his father more quickly than it takes to tell it. The man never stopped. It was the mother's life or the father's. The boy had to choose. He let the pistol do the choosing.

It barked once. On came the father, closing in. Again the weapon spirt forth a bullet. Eller dropped, mortally wounded. The mother swooned in her son's arms. But her life had been saved.

They hurried the father away to a hospital, where the surgeons said he was mortally wounded. The boy was arrested and held without bail. Had he allowed his mother to be beaten to

death he would not have been put in a cell; he had his choice to make, and only a moment to make it in.

What would the everyday son do in such a case?

Has he a right to shoot down his father to save his mother? Should he not be impartial? Would it not be better to fight than to shoot? Is a son justified in killing his father to save his mother's life?

Other sons have been called upon to decide, just as Theodore Eller has had to decide, and in the twinkling of an eye, too. And occasionally even a daughter has been forced to make the same decision in a moment's time.

Only two weeks ago 15-year-old Frank Peterson, out at Greenport, L. I., had to face the same dilemma. If he didn't shoot his father, then his mother's life would pay the forfeit.

Frank didn't hesitate. He fired, brought his father down with a serious wound in the head and saved his mother's life. Then he ran for the doctor to come to his father, Frank Peterson, Sr.

The Petersons are well-to-do and live in a pretty home at 48 Bridge street, Greenport. Frank is the eldest of seven children. But the father, apparently, has little love for his family, and more than once his wife has felt the effect of his blows, so the son said when the shooting was over.

It was Sunday. The husband had been browbeating the wife. Suddenly he turned and with clenched fists started for her. She screamed for the boy.

"Stop!" yelled Frank, as his mother covered to the floor.

Boy's First Shot Fatal.

On came the father. The boy, without another word, drew a revolver from his pocket, and as his father struck out at his mother, fired one shot. It hit the frenzied man in the jaw, ranged upward and lodged behind the right eye. Peterson dropped.

"I've shot my father because he was going to strike my mother," said Frank, running into the house of Dr. A. C. Loper. "Go to him, quick!"

Then the boy went to the home of the chief of the chief of police and gave himself up. He was put in the village jail. The mother and the children corroborated Frank in all he said. The father was hurried to a hospital.

Mrs. Madeline Langlotz had even a harder task set before her than these boys. She saw her father, George Wasser, shoot her mother down in their flat at 2058 Third avenue, where Mrs. Langlotz, a widow, was living with her mother. The daughter had to make her choice only too quickly.

"He was a beast," she declared, vehemently. "I'm glad I shot him. He

shot my mother, the best woman that ever lived. When I saw her fall I fired at the man the best I knew how and I'm glad one of the bullets hit him—my father!"

The Wassers, husband and wife, had separated. When Mrs. Langlotz's husband died she went back to live with her mother and her little sisters. Three years ago the man came into the little home and attacked little Annie, one of his daughters. He was arrested, but nothing came of the case. This made him bold.

Forced His Way into House.

Wasser hung around the home and more than once he tried to get in. He was arrested, but each time got free on some plea or another. This made him bolder still. On the fatal morning he knocked at the door of the flat and demanded admission.

"If you don't let me in I'll kill you and all the brats!" he yelled.

There was no answer. He broke down the door. Mrs. Wasser stood facing him. There was fire in her eye and decision in her voice.

"I'll never take you back, George Wasser," she said, firmly.

This was her death warrant.

"Well," sneered Wasser, "you'll never telephone for the police again."

Mrs. Wasser started to run. Wasser pulled a revolver out of his pocket. Before his wife had taken two steps he fired. The bullet struck the poor woman in the breast. She fell to the floor with her clothing ablaze, so close was the range. Mrs. Langlotz and little Annie were in a rear room. They rushed out just in time to see their mother fall. Remembering the revolver her mother kept in the bureau drawer, Annie ran and got it. Quick as a flash she handed it to Mrs. Langlotz. Just then Wasser was raising his weapon to shoot again at his helpless wife.

Daughter's Aim Deadly.

His daughter fired first. The bullet grazed his face. Wasser returned the shot, but he missed, though they were but 12 feet apart. Then the daughter fired again and both emptied their revolvers. Every shot of Wasser's missed, but the daughter's last shot found its mark. It made an ugly hole in the man's forehead and he sank to the floor with a groan. Then the young widow dropped her revolver and fell in a faint after the duel with her father.

The police came in; the two wounded persons were taken to the hospital. The wife died in the afternoon at three o'clock; the husband an hour later. The daughter was arrested, only to be freed next day.

"She wasn't a murderess," said one of the coroner's jury. "She was a heroine!"

And for all that, facing her father's loaded revolver, firing shot for shot, the young widow hadn't been able to save her dear mother's life. But she had made her choice between the two, and she did the best she could.

Constantin Pellegrino, barely 17

He fired twice, as quickly as he could. Both bullets hit the would-be murderer in the left side. He dropped his victim and ran for the door. Twice again the boy fired. This time he hit his father twice in the back of the head. The man fell in his tracks.

A policeman heard the shots and came running up.

"I've killed my father," said Constantin, coolly. "I want you to arrest me. I had to do it to save my mother's life."

The mother implored the police not to arrest her son, but law is law, and he had to go to the station house. The son, knowing the choice he had made, was perfectly cool.

"I knew I would have to kill my father some day," he said. "He has always been saying he would kill my mother, and I am glad it is over now."

In Bowerton, Miss., it was only a little boy who stood between his mother and his infuriated father. Frank Mullins was whipping one of his children unmercifully, when the mother interfered.

"Curse you!" cried the husband and father. "I'll kill you if you don't let me alone."

The mother stepped between the child and her infuriated husband. He struck her and knocked her down, kicking her face as he did it. Their ten-year-old boy saw it all from across the yard, and running into the house, got a rifle and leveled it from behind the woodpile and shot his father dead. But he saved his mother's life.

Ordered Son to Kill Father.

Frederick Cramer, his wife and their children lived at Page, South Dakota. Husband and wife had domestic differences and it was agreed that he should have the first floor of their home and she and her sons the second floor.

One night Cramer came home in an ugly mood and tried to break into the second floor of the house. Mrs. Cramer barricaded the downstairs door, but her husband broke it down.

"I'll settle you!" he cried, plunging up the stairs. Mrs. Cramer ran and got her loaded revolver. She leveled it down the stairs, but her hand trembled so that she could not aim.

"Take this and shoot him," she said to her eldest son, Arthur, a boy of 16, handing him the pistol. "I'm too nervous to hold it."

The boy obeyed only too well. One shot was fatal.

"I only did what my mother told me," he said, "and that was to save her life from my father."

Ezekiel Gregory, an old farmer, of Davidson, N. C., didn't like the hours of his son, David. He told him that he ought to rise earlier. He killed his father with an ax and escaped.

John and James Randall, 14 and 15 years old, of Marshall, N. C., found their mother murdered, as they believed, by their father. They hurried for their rifles, and one of the boys wanted to kill him then and there when they found him.

"No," said the other, "let's keep him

JOHN HENRY ON THE DRUMMER BOYS

BY GEO. V. HOBART, ("HUGH M'HUGH.")

Dear Bunch: In that crowd of swift drummer boys going New Yorkward in the Mr. Pullman's sleep-wagon yesterday, one of the speediest was Buck Jones.

Buck's wife and a three-year-old were traveling with him, but he wasn't giving it out through a megaphone.

Buck is one of those goose-headed guys who begin to scratch gravel and start in to make a killing every time they see a pretty girl.

Across the aisle sat two pet canaries from Plainfield, N. J.

They were members of the Sou-brette Stinging society, and they were en route to the west to join the "Bunch of Birds Burlesque Company."

Their names were Millie and Tillie, and they wore Merry Widow hats, and did a sister act that contained more bad grammar than an East Side pin-hole game.

Millie was fully aware that she could back Duse off the map, and Tillie was ready to bet a week's salary that she could make Bernhardt feel like she was out in the storm we had day before yesterday.

Slim called them the Roast-Beef Sisters, Rare and Well-Done.

In a minute the castors on Buck's neck began to turn.

Slim put us wise with a wink, so we lit the fire and began to cook it up.

Buck's heart was warming for the birds in the gilded cage.

"The real Kibo!" said Slim; "it's a plain case of Appomattox; the war is over and they are yours, Buck!"

Buck turned a few more volts into his twinkling lamps.

"Lower your mail-sail, Buck, and drop alongside; you've made the landing," suggested Bursess.

Buck began to feel his necktie and play patty-cake with the little bald spot on the top of his head.

"Stop the hansom and get out; you're at your corner," said Dave.

The Sweet Dreams across the way were giving Buck the glorious eye-roll, and he felt like dinner was ready.

"Hang up your hat, Buck, and gather the myrtle with Mary!" I chipped in.

Then Buck bounced over and began to show Millie and Tillie what a handsome brute he was at close quarters.

He sat on the arm of the seat and warmed up.

In less than a minute he crowded the information on them that he was a millionaire, who had escaped from Los Angeles, Cal., and he was just going to put them both in grand opera, when his three-year-old toddled down the aisle and grabbed him by the coat-tail.

"Papa! Mamma wants 'oo to det my bottle of milk!"

"Stung!" shrieked Slim.

"Back to the nursery!" howled Malcolm, and then as Buck crawled away to home and mother we let out a yell

Slim was pale but game. "Sometimes!" he answered. "Do you like a good seegar?" queried Sledgeheimer.

We looked for the engine to hit a cow any minute now.

"Sure!" said Slim, weak all over.

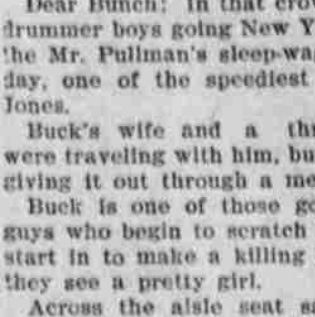
"Well," said Sledgeheimer, "here is my brudder-in-law's card. He makes dot Grass Widow seegar on Sigth Avenue. Gif him a call und mention my name. He vil be glad to see you, yet."

Then Sledgeheimer went away back and sat down.

The laugh was on Slim, so he dared us all into the cafe, and after he got busy with the button we all voted in favor of a Monticello highball.

After we had dampened our thirsts, Bill Bursess showed us how Hammerstein would Americanize "Bingen on the Rhine." Bill called it "Der Empire," in honor of the Empire State Express, Frank Westerton said. (English joke—rotten!) This is how Bill spiled it:

An Empire of der Big League lay dying, full mit fears; dare was lack of



Buck Turned a Few More Volts into His Twinkling Lamps.



MRS. MADELINE LANGLOTZ WHO SHOT HER FATHER

MRS. FRANK PETERSON, SR.

years old, had hardly as much time to make up his mind whether he should see his mother stabbed to death or kill his father.

The family lived at No. 198 East Twenty-third street, Brooklyn. The father, Anselmo, came home one evening crazed with drink. He attacked his wife and began to drag her around by her hair. The boy sprang to his mother's aid and the father knocked him to the floor.

"Now I'm going to kill you both!" yelled Pellegrino, drawing a knife.

Just in Time to Save Mother.

The boy wriggled away from his father's clutches—the man was too busy holding his wife by her hair—and ran into the bedroom, where he knew his father kept a loaded revolver under the pillow. Constantin got back into the dining-room just in time to see his father about to slash his mother across the throat with his stiletto.

guarded here until we can get the police."

So while one held his loaded rifle against his father's temple the other telegraphed for a constable. Hour after hour they kept their grim vigil, and when the constable came they turned over their prisoner—their father—to the tender mercies of the law.

Randall had driven his wife from their home. She sought refuge with friends, and he came for her. Reluctantly she went back with him. Later Mrs. Randall was found by her head crushed in. So they hunted down their father and, after finding him, kept guard until he was safe in jail.

Not one son in a million is called upon to do as these sons and daughters have had to do. Few have to make such a choice. But when the call is made what shall it be—

Father or mother?—New York World.



Their Names Were Millie and Tillie.

that caused the conductor to think the train had struck a Wild West show.

During the rest of the trip Buck was nailed to his seat.

Every time he tried to use the elastic in his neck, the wife would burn him with a hard, cold glitter.

The Roast-Beef Sisters seemed to be all carved up about something or other.

The drummers went back to the shop, and were selling things again when Sledgeheimer fluttered down among us.

Maybe you've never met Jakey Sledgeheimer!

He travels for a firm in Brooklyn that makes imitation grape-fruit and rubber flann huddle.

Jakey is the laziest loosener that ever tied a string around a roll.

The boys call him putty because he's the next thing to a pane.

He's such a stingy loosener that he looks at you with one eye so's not to waste the other.

If you ask Sledgeheimer what time it is he takes off four minutes as his commission for telling you.

"Slim," said Sledgeheimer to Arthur Shaw, "do you smoke?"

It was a knock-out.

In the annals of the road no one could look back to the proud day when Sledgeheimer had coughed.

Once, so the legend runs, he gave a porter a nickel, but it was afterward discovered that Sledgeheimer was asleep, and not responsible at the time, so the porter gave it back.

Sledgeheimer tried to collect three cents' interest for the time the porter kept the nickel, and the conductor had to punch his mileage and his nose before he'd let go.

And now Sledgeheimer had asked Slim if he smoked!

players' nursing; aber nit of players' tears, but a cop policeman watched him vile his life's blood ebbed away, and bent mit plying glances to hear vot did he say. Der dying Empire filtered as he took dot copper's hant, and he set: "I never more vil see my own, my native land; took a message and a token to some distant friends of mine, for I was born at Dopeville—at Dopeville down der Line!"

"Tell my dear, short-sighted brothers ven dey meet and crowd round to hear my mournful story, dot I bravely held my ground; dot I fofooled my decisions and I kogooed at der mob, all howling for my heart's blood (ours is a fearful chob); full many a kicker, ghastly vite, hard on der bench I sat until some players sneaked behind and soaked me mit a vat; den I qvite swift and suttely vent into a decline, no more vill I see Dopeville—dear Dopeville down der Line!"

"Tell Pulliam his udder sons must comfort his olt age!—ach, how I luffed to put dis head of mine mitta cage! For my father was an Empire bold, and efen as a child my heart chumped fort to hear him tolt of struggles fierce and vild, and ven he died unde left us all ve hat to took our choice I let dem half just vot dey vished but kept my father's voice, and mit boyish yells I practiced on der leedle olt cat nine on Sleepy Street in Dopeville—dear Dopeville down der Line!"

"Tell my brothers in der pitzness not to stood and bolt der breath and vatch dem awful players celebrationing my death, but to look upon dem proudly, mit a cold and codfish eye, and fine dem to der limit—as I dit in days gone by; and if der players fuss demsels, and mit der words eggclaim, just listen at der game—for der Empire's rank decisions must be backed as I backed mine for der honor of olt Dopeville—sweet Dopeville down der Line!"

His voice chumped to a visper; his grasp was childish weak; his eyes put on a played-out look, his speaker ceased to speak; der copper bent to lift him, but, chee viz! It was too late! Der Empire of der Big League was ould—ould at der plate! Three strikes, py Chimeddy! and he hat no chance to call like he used to dit do often: "Say! dot last vun was a ball!" Vell, he's gone, I expectation, vare der voodbine does der tvine, but dare's plendy more at Dopeville—dear Dopeville down der Line!"

By this time we had reached Utica, and I had to quit them.

Yours as usual,
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Curious Marriage Custom.

An English traveler in northern Nigeria describes an interesting custom connected with marriage which he came across among the Fulani, a tribe of wandering herdsmen who show no trace of negro blood and are supposed to be of Asiatic origin. One might almost suppose that they had advanced ideas about the relations of the sexes. Before a man is allowed to marry he has to stand a sound thrashing without wincing. In some parts of Europe this test of fitness for the wedded state might more reasonably be applied to the woman. One is reminded of Thomas Edgeworth's friend, who in selecting a bride dropped hot sealing wax on the girl's arm and fired a pistol off near her ear.