

AN INDIAN CAT CASE

Decision as to the Liability of Owners of Interests in Feline Property.

Now, this is the strange, true tale of a cat, which comes from far India, where the law knows no jesting and justice is weighed with delicate scales. It has been duly published in the legal reports and it is truth.

The ancient house of Manockjee, Poonjeejee & Co is situated in Boran Bazar Street ford, Bombay, and it is claimed by the members of firm that their ancestors have carried on the same business, with a few modifications to meet the necessities of the European trade, for more centuries than the United States has been known to the map of the world. The firms is made up of four partners, and their counting-room and one of their warehouses are in this building. This particular store-room contains only the silks and other precious stuffs for which the house is noted in trade all over the world.

One day there started into the counting-room, where the four sedate and dignified merchants sat smoking the pipe, a puss in the solemn silence so common to the prosperous Oriental merchant, a pretty white kitten. Little attention was paid to puss until she had made the round of the room, rubbed her fur against the leg of each member of the firm, and finally walked demurely over to the strong box which stood in one corner. Here she paused for a moment and seemed to critically examine its fastenings. The animal seemed quite satisfied with the construction of the safe, and when she had again reached the door-side she made a playful leap, rapped the bunch of keys with her velvet-like paws, stretched herself comfortably beside the door, and began to purr a little cat-like song, looking at the four partners with an expression which seemed to say: "Now, gentlemen, you may rest perfectly secure. I will assume all the responsibility of this business myself."

"Brothers," exclaimed one of the party, "this is surely a good omen. Unbidden this pretty little creature comes into our place of business; without ceremony she introduces herself to each member of the firm. Next she examines our property to see if we are solvent and in good standing with the world of trade. May this not be a visitation from heaven disguised in strange form? Let us adopt the little stranger and give it a home in the great house of Manockjee, Poonjeejee & Co. Should we refuse her shelter it is possible we offend the deity. What say you, my good brothers?"

"Well," said another member of the house, "I am quite willing to admit that we really have no right to turn it away. Suppose, as has been suggested, we take the little thing, and in order that the good or ill-fortune it may bring be equally divided we will consider it one of the assets of the firm. Now, how shall we divide the ownership of the animal?"

"Oh, well," exclaimed the others, "we will follow the regular precedent of our people. You, Manockjee, may claim the left fore leg; I will take the right, and so on till the cat is equally divided. Is this satisfactory to all?"

There being no objection to this mode of distribution, it was so agreed. The book keeper was called into the counting house and the ownership of the cat was duly entered on the books of the firm as one of assets, each quarter of the animal being designated as the property of some individual member of the firm.

All went well with the house of Manockjee, Poonjeejee, & Co. for a year or so and puss became a great favorite with the whole household. Never for centuries had the great house been so prosperous. Trade with the west had almost doubled. Connections had been established in parts of North and South America, all of which were successful. Yes, there could be no mistake, the kitten had been a harbinger of good luck.

Some time during the month of December, 1897, while puss was playing in the street in front of the store, its attention was distracted by some little moving object, and it did not notice a bullock cart coming from an opposite direction. In a moment poor kit was under the heavy wheels, and before it could extricate itself, one white paw was crushed and broken.

The left foreleg of the cat belonged to Manockjee, so it was the duty of Manockjee to send for the physician and foot the bill. A doctor was accordingly sent for and did all in his power to relieve his sufferings of the injured animal. The leg was wrapped in bandages soaked in turpentine liniment, and regularly each day the doctor made his professional call at the great house to hasten the recovery of the mascot.

In the early part of January, 1898, the cat was walking about over the tables and desks of the counting-room when she overturned a lighted lamp. The flames from the lamp ignited the turpentine with which the bandages were soaked, and puss

"The Mill Cannot Grind with Water That's Past."

This is what a fagged out, tearful little woman said in telling her cares and weaknesses. Her friend encouraged by telling of a relative who had just such troubles and was cured by Hood's Sarsaparilla.

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Erysipelas Sores—"After scarlet fever a running sore was left on my nose. Took Hood's Sarsaparilla and it cured me. My brother was also relieved by it of erysipelas in his face." ELLA COURSER, Burden, N. B.

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syll flew in terror through the counting-room into the warehouse. The agony of the burning bandages about the leg kept the poor beast going at top speed evidently hoping to find relief in some of the snug corners among the bales of silk, where she has taken many a quiet nap on other occasions. Before help could be summoned the great warehouse with its valuable contents was in flames, and three hours after only the big iron safe marked the spot where once stood the old, old house of Manockjee, Poonjeejee & Co. The partners took their loss with all the stoical forbearance of the confirmed fatalist. All things were ordained in the beginning. This was merely a decree of fate. So they bowed deferentially to fate and calmly proceeded to rebuild upon the ruins.

But now came the important question of settling for loss. Who was at fault? A business meeting of the firm was held and it was soon decided by the other three partners that the whole damage was caused by the burning bandage wrapped about the left fore leg of the cat. That left fore leg was the individual and separate property of Manockjee, which made decision an easy matter. Of course, Manockjee was responsible for the destruction of the warehouse. There was no room for doubt.

Although Manockjee did not dispute this assertion outright, still he asked for time to reflect before assuming the entire responsibility. At last he asked his partners if they would object to a friendly suit in

the courts to decide for a certainty just where the blame should be lodged. "In this manner," said he, "we may settle the matter for all time and it will leave no room for hard feelings."

The case was presented fairly and without prejudice. Manockjee had retained one of the brightest pleaders before the Indian bar, and through his shrewd efforts the judge handed down the following remarkable decision.

"A cat being owned in severalty by four men, each being proprietor of a designated section of the animal, overturned a lamp and set fire to a bandage on the left fore-leg. The cat in fright ran into the warehouse and communicated the fire to the goods stored therein.

"Held, that the owner of the section of the cat which included the bandaged leg is not responsible for the damage caused by the fire, because the three other legs, were guilty of contributory negligence in that it was by the assistance of the legs owned by them that the cat was enabled to run into the warehouse and spread the flames. Judgment for defendant."

THE "OPEN SHELF" SYSTEM.
It's Great Success in the Branches of the Free Circulating Library.

"The only proper way to manage a circulating library so as to avoid all unnecessary delay and friction in the bringing together of book and reader, is to run it upon the open-shelf system," said J. Norris Wing, the librarian of the New York Free Circulating Library, in answer to a query as to how he liked the change that had been made in the library under his charge. The New York Free Circulating Library in round numbers has 135,000 volumes on its shelves, and their total circulation for the last library year was 1,241,000. It operates eleven branches, distributed over the territory of Manhattan. They are situated as follows: 49 Bond street, 135 Second avenue, 251 West Thirtieth street, 130 West Twenty-third street, 215 East Thirty-fourth street, 229 West Forty-second street, 261 West Sixty-ninth street, 1523 Second avenue, 206 West 100 street, 18 West 125th street, and the newest branch opened six weeks ago, at 22 East Broadway.

From 1880, when the first branch was opened, up to about eighteen months ago the public was excluded from the places the books are kept, and when the proposition was made to give the reader free access to all books in the library many of the attendants shook their heads. The experiment was tried, however, first in one and then in another branch, and the innovation has proved so satisfactory that today the open shelf system is in operation in every one of them. The difficulties that had to be overcome were many, lack of space and unsuitable shelf arrangements being the most formidable ones, but the arrangements are now such that the system can be said

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to have demonstrated its superiority over all other library systems. It simply means that any member of the library if he wishes to borrow a book goes directly to the proper shelf, makes his own selection, has it charged to him and goes away.

It will be seen at a glance that this method offers a great many advantages to the reader. There is no longer any need for his spending his time looking over the catalogue for the proper number of the book he wants no more filling out slips, and no waiting till the librarian returns after weary search to inform him that the book is out. All shelves are marked plainly, showing what sort of books they contain, and the subdivisions hold the volumes in alphabetical order of their author. One walks to the shelf, sees at a glance whether the book is there or not and it necessary chooses something else. The saving of time in itself is quite welcome to the average reader, but it is by no means the greatest benefit he derives from the system. It allows him to handle books, look at them, browse in them and judge for himself whether he would care to read a certain book. To many people it is nothing short of a revelation that other books have been written besides popular novels, and many a girl has learned to read history, literature and scientific works who come to the library to get the novels by "The Duchess," and would never have asked for anything else.

To the librarians also the open shelf system has been a boon in more than one way. It has saved them a great deal of physical fatigue, the running about in looking for books and the carrying them from all parts of the building to the delivery desk, and the reduction in amount of purely physical labor has made them more alert to exercise their influence in another direction. They now come into close personal contact with the readers, they are being constantly asked whether they would recommend one book or another, and the irrita-

tion consequent upon crowds clamoring outside the railing is gone. One of the women librarians said:

"Now we are fresh when our day's work is done. Moreover, we know that we can and do help these people who use the library to an extent not one of us thought possible under the old system. Before we mostly only carried books; now we advise about books."

There are however, two serious drawbacks that go with the open shelf system. First of all, the books suffer much more. They are handled by many hands. This tells, and the wear and tear is much greater than under the old system.

The second difficulty lies in the seemingly utter impossibility of preventing the stealing of books. It seems to be almost to be expected that books will be stolen almost from any library; and the opportunities for thefts naturally increase by operating the library upon the open-shelf system. Still the experience of the Free Circulating Library, with a clientele of all ages, races and conditions of people is that, as a whole, these thefts are not of such importance as to offset the benefits of the system, and one of the librarians in charge of a branch remarked: "I do not know how many books were stolen elsewhere, but in my branch the thefts do not amount to anything worth speaking about, and even if they'd steal much more, I would still prefer the open shelf."

A Much Maligned Beverage.

"Death in the tea-pot." Well cheap teas—stewed instead of steeped—caused the saying. Good teas properly drawn, are a wholesome, as well as palatable drink; but they must be good, as for instance, Tilly's Elephant Brand Indo-Ceylon Tea.

LIKE THE PROVERBIAL CAT.

How the Professor's Desk Came Back at His Own Expense.

The young lawyer has good taste in antiques and has done much browsing about in search of them. He knows the places in Worcester and the neighboring towns where those who like old furniture and have the money to pay for it may find what will delight their souls. So it was no more than natural, when the professor sold his desk, which was of the ancient design, but of doubtful age, and began looking for something better, that he should consult the young lawyer. The man of law was delightfully sympathetic. "I saw just what you want the other day," he said, "but I'm afraid it's gone now. I'll keep my eye out for the next few days."

"Well, if you see anything really good," said the professor, "buy it and hold it for me. It is not safe to let a bargain go too long. Only let me know as soon as you can, so that I won't be buying one too. It would be a great favor."

"Not at all," said the lawyer. "It's a pleasure to buy a good thing, even if you are not to keep it yourself."

In a day or two the professor received a joyful note. The young lawyer's mother had found just what the professor wanted—a beauty, one of those rare old bits that they cannot counterfeited, and such a bargain, only \$10. The professor was charmed. He immediately sent his check to the lawyer with an enthusiastic note of thanks and a request to send up the desk. He was in the hall when it arrived. He tore off the sacking and inspected his prize: It was his old desk that he had sold a few days before for \$8.50.

CANADIAN PACIFIC

Harvest Excursion
TO THE

Canadian
North-West.

On August 29th and September 12th the Canadian Pacific Railway Co., will run two Harvest Excursions from points on their line in New Brunswick to all points in the Canadian North West. Tickets will be second class in each direction and good for return till October 28th, and November 11th, 1899, respectively.

The return rates will be as follows,—
TO
Winnipeg, Deloraine, Reston, Estovon, Binscarth, Moseomin, Cowan... \$28.00
Regina, Moose Jaw, Yorkton..... 30.00
Prince Albert, Calgary..... 35.00
Red Deer, Edmonton..... 40.00

As the above tickets will not be on file from stations east of St. John, it will be necessary for any one wishing to take advantage of these cheap excursions to purchase local tickets to St. John, N. B., and to purchase there from the Canadian Pacific Railway Co.

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