

## WIFE OR SLAVE?

QUEER CASE AT PORT PIRIE.

HUSBAND TOOK THE CAT TO MAKE HIS WIFE LONELY.

Port Pirie, December 22.

"The defendant is angry with his wife, because she refuses to wear a veil over her face, as is the custom of Circassian women." This statement was made by Detective Noblett at the Police Court to-day, when Dora GasiEFF sought a separation from her husband, Bekza GasiEFF, because of desertion. Both parties are Russians, and cannot speak English. The case was opened a fortnight ago, and after some witnesses had been examined for over an hour, Mr. S. J. Mitchell, S.M., concluded that the interpreter was not able to understand what was said, and adjourned the hearing.

The case to-day presented some peculiar features. Mr. Stuart Ronald appeared for the defendant, and Detective Noblett conducted the case for the plaintiff, a young, handsome woman, whose pretty gestures so impressed one of the court officials that he was led to remark, "She should have been an actress." Through an interpreter the plaintiff said her husband had been very cruel to her, and often got cross when the baby cried.

The S.M.—What does he do when the baby cries?

The witness said he walked out of the room. (Laughter.) She told the court she would have nothing more to do with the defendant. He often beat her, and she was frightened of him. Her condition would not allow her to work.

The S.M.—But has your husband deserted you?

The Witness—I left him and went to stay with friends because I was afraid

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Mr. Ronald—Then there is no case.

The S.M.—The charge should be amended.

Detective Noblett (to the witness)—Do you remember what he did to you on Friday?—Yes, he beat me and then gave me a razor and told me to cut him to bits with it. When I refused he locked me in a room by myself, and even took the cat out.

The S.M.—What did he take the cat out for?

The Witness—So that I would be lonely. (Laughter).

How long were you in the room—About an hour.

And who let you out?—Some Russians came along and opened the door.

The S.M. (to Mr. Ronald)—Is your client willing to pay his wife anything?

Mr. Ronald—The man is very fond of her and wants her to return home, but it seems as though she has got tired of him. The pair were married last Easter, and a Greek priest came all the way from Melbourne to perform the ceremony. It is quite apparent from the woman's dress that she is well provided for. The Panama hat she is wearing is a most expensive one, and cost more money than many people could afford. Her dress shows that she is very well looked after.

The S.M.—That is often the case in this country. It frequently happens that the domestic servant dresses more expensively than her mistress.

Detective Noblett—How many men are there in your husband's house?

The Witness—Six, besides my husband.

Mr. Ronald—Do these men have meals there or do they only sleep in the house?—No they look after their own rooms.

The S.M.—It seems a hopeless case. I must either dismiss or adjourn it.

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Mr. Ronald—The husband is quite willing to take his wife back.

The S.M.—As a slave.

Mr. Ronald—But those men boarding at the house look after themselves.

The S.M.—It's the condition of this woman that probably makes her afraid to go back. There are these six men in the house, and although that sort of thing might occur in Russia it cannot be done here. I daresay the defendant came out to Australia expecting to lead the same life as in Russia, but his wife will not submit to it.

Detective Noblett—This man is a Circassian and in his country the women wear veils. The defendant did not like the idea of his wife going about unveiled in the presence of men. That seems to be the cause of the whole trouble.

Mr. Ronald—He is very anxious that his wife should return home.

The S.M.—So would any man if his wife kept six boarders in the house and got nothing for it. It is most unfortunate that nowadays many men look upon their wives merely as domestic servants. I can quite understand the plaintiff objecting to live at home. She is certainly wearing very good clothes. Probably they are worth three times as much as she would have in a whole year in Russia, but good clothes don't make for a happy home. (To the interpreter)—Tell her she must go back and live with her husband. If he is cruel to her she can then come and see me again.

Mrs. GasiEFF, when told this, shook her head and said she could never, never live with him again.

The case was dismissed.

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