

ACQUITTAL OF LEAH ALEXANDER WHO KILLED VAN BAALEN

TOOK A CHANCE WHEN HE SAID HE WAS UNMARRIED

UNWRITTEN LAW WAS FEATURE OF THE DEFENSE

The case of Leah Alexander, the young woman who shot and killed Joseph Van Baalen in San Francisco, and who was recently acquitted by a jury, has caused considerable discussion.

The plea of the prosecution was that it would be unsafe for the jury to acquit the defendant; that, in effect, if this were done every woman who had a grievance against a man, real or fancied, would become an executioner; she would take a pistol and kill him.

The case of Leah Alexander is not an unusual one, except as to the tragedy.

Van Baalen met the girl and told her that he was a single man. He courted her; they became engaged, with the consent of her mother.

In accordance with the frequent custom, he secured the good graces of the mother, told her that he would provide a good home for both she and her daughter.

Finally he induced the girl to go with him to Cuba, as man and wife; that they would be married later. She consented to this. When they reached Cuba the girl opened a telegram to Van Baalen. It was from his wife. That was the first she knew of the deception.

She left him at once and returned to her mother's home in Los Angeles.

Had Van Baalen allowed the incident to close then, he might be alive now. But he followed the girl to Los Angeles; declared that he was going to get a divorce from his wife from whom he had long been separated. He made his peace with the girl's mother with the same story. They came to San Francisco.

Shortly after this Van Baalen met another girl who took his fancy. He gave Miss Alexander to understand that he would have no more to do with her. She attempted suicide. She was being treated in a sanitarium for her self-inflicted injuries. She escaped from the sanitarium and went to Van Baalen's office. After a short interview with him she shot and killed him.

When Miss Alexander returned from Cuba had she a father or brother to whom to tell the story, and her father or brother had sought Van Baalen and killed him, as occasionally happens, the unwritten law would no doubt have acquitted the executioner. In this case the young woman became the executioner of the man who had ruined her life.

When Van Baalen began to masquerade as a single man he took chances and he knew it. Every married man who does that sort of thing knows that he is taking a chance of either being disgraced or slain. The latter happened to Van Baalen. He was the architect of his own destiny; it was death. No one was to blame but himself. He violated the laws of society; he ruined the life of a girl.

A similar case recently occurred in Los Angeles. A man in San Francisco masqueraded as unmarried; promised to marry a woman; told her mother he would give them both a home. He went to Los Angeles and

sent for the woman who supposed she was to be his wife. She went to him accompanied by her little girl. It is assumed that after reaching Los Angeles she learned of the man's deception. She shot and killed him, her little girl and herself. It is thought that the child was killed by accident in the volley of shots.

This man took a chance in the beginning, when he told the woman he was unmarried, he knew that it might be disgrace or death; he may have been callous to the former and indifferent to the latter.

Maury Diggs, who is under sentence to serve a term in San Quentin, and now out on bail, for betraying a girl under the plea that he would get a divorce from his wife and marry her, has been at it again. Under the name of "Mr. Thompson" he became acquainted with a young woman in San Francisco. He is now in jail facing a serious charge; a crime committed under the name of "Mr. Thompson."