Excerpted from “Superstition in Arcadia” by Augustus Jessopp in ***Living Age****,* vol155 p. 718-9 (1882)

....This was some twenty years ago; but let not the enlightened public suppose that these things are things of the past. Less than five years ago Mr. Scroggins who, as far as I know, still cultivates some eighty or one hundred acres of land in Tegea, was brought before the magistrates at Megalopolis, and charged with an aggravated assault upon a poor woman, the wife of one of his own laborers. The man and woman were both very reluctant witnesses, but unfortunately it was a police case, and they could not help appearing. Scroggins had been caught *flagrante delicto*, barbarously beating the woman with a hedge-stake, and had been actually dragged away by one of the county police, but not before he had *drawn blood*.

Scroggins's account of the matter was that he had two score of lambs, as pretty lambs as ever you set eyes on. They were going to pay his half-year's rent, and leave something to the good then. But lo! They "what you call fell off," and there was no accounting for it. Of course he was annoyed, and he thought about it early and late. One night he dreamed a dream. He was walking in his meadow, and there he came upon John Cudlip's cottage, and he saw his lambs "frolickin' surprisin'; " but as he watched them Mrs. Cudlip came forth from her door, and turned up a sod in the meadow, and lo! from the bowels of the earth issued another score of lambs; but they were black lambs, and they had no frolic in them, and they came in dread array towards the frolickers, and Mr. Scroggins could bear the vision no longer, but awoke — "that dripping as you might ha' wrung him out."There could be no doubt after that what had come to his lambs!

Next morning, while the dew was on the grass, Mr.Scroggins, in painful excitement, rushed to Cudlip's door; *there -was a loose sod* not a yard from it. Scroggins, in wild dismay, turned it over. "And there, gentlemen, as sure as you're a-sitting there— there was a *walking toad*! After that, the guilt of the witch could not be doubted by the most sceptical. If it had been a jumping frog, charity or incredulity might have paused before arriving at a conclusion. But a *walking* toad—what more could a man require in the way of proof positive?

The magistrates, I grieve to say, took a different view of the case, and, spite of Scroggins's repeated assurance that he bore the woman no malice, and wanted to draw not a drop more blood than would suffice to protect him from the evil eye in future, they inflicted a somewhat heavy fine rather than ruin the poor man by sending him to jail. The fine was paid then and there; but as Mr. Scroggins laid down the money he protested before gods and men that it was all very well for the gentlemen to talk their high-flown bombast when the reporters were present to take them down. But you were never going to make him believe but that " there ain't none on 'em as wouldn't ha' served that there woman wus 'n I did if he'd been overlooked same as I was."

[an excerpt from the chapter “Arcadia in some phases of her faith” in **Arcady, for better for worse** by Augustus Jessopp D.D.p. 96-8] (https://archive.org/details/arcadyforbetterf00jessuoft)
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