

A Legend

Ross Winn

1897

A knave and a fool on an island were cast;
Their ship had gone down in the hurricane's blast.
On the island they met, while hungry and wet,
A wise man who aid to them gave;
They were given a home, with the freedom to roam,
Bounded by naught but the wave.
The fool, though demented, was easily contented
To live in this beautiful land:
But the knave was a schemer (there's plenty lots meaner);
He thought out a wonderful plan.
Said the knave to the fool: "It's plain that some rule
Must govern society here,
Else murder we'll do—Anarchy ensue—
A government is needed, I fear."
The fool was demented, and of course he consented,
But the wise man opposed it alone;
His logic was parried, for the measure was carried
Over the minority of one.
Now none but a fool, or a knave wants to rule,
For a wise man knows better than that;
So the knave was elected, for no fool is selected
To wear a governor's hat.
The knave, as a state, was something quite great,
The fool was lost in surprise;
As he looked on in awe, for the majesty of law
Quite blinded and dazzled his eyes.
But states are expensive, and the fool was quite pensive
When the tax collector called round,
And took all his money, (and it wasn't quite funny)—

As payment for using the ground.

E're long the poor fool, by means of the rule
Of this cunning knave of a state,
Was reduced to a slave and made work for the knave,
From early morning till late.

The wise man foresaw that the knave and his law
Would drive from the island its peace;
He was branded a hater of law, and a traitor,
For whom toleration should cease.

The fool patriotic, and quite idiotic—
(Synonymous terms I declare,)
Was ready with chains, and the law's legal pains,
To fasten his own despair,

And to kill with a blow, first his enemy's foe,
And his own true defender and friend;
To preserve the knave's law, which he worshiped in awe
And to the gallows the hero did send.

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