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HIRAM SOMER'S WILL.

THE portion of Texas that lies between the Guadalupe and San Antonio, and through which so many traders, emigrants, and adventurers necessarily pass in their route from the Eastern States was at no very distant date the scene of many a perilous adventure, one of which it is my purpose to relate, and for the veracity of which I can personally vouch.

It was at the close of an October day that a pair of well-mounted riders pulled up before one of the Mexican ranches that dot the country here and there. At the door of the building, which was long and low, a sort of double cabin, the landlord lounged carelessly against a post.

A forbidding-looking fellow enough; but one cannot pick his company on the plains, and our travelers saluted frankly and asked for a night's lodging.

"You can pay, señors, eh?" was the somewhat inhospitable query of the host.

"Certainly; we are not beggars!" It was the younger of the travelers who spoke—a tall trimly-built man of about six or eight and twenty, with a blonde, ruddy complexion, a clear gray eye, crisp auburn hair, and a long fair mustache, that drooped over a firm, well-shaped mouth—a face and figure denoting strength, courage and high culture.

His companion was of shorter build, broad shouldered and muscular, with dark eyes, hair and beard—a man that would pass in a crowd for a blunt, well-meaning fellow, but one at whom a close observer would look twice before turning his back once.

As the light-haired stranger made the rather haughty reply we have quoted, the dark one laid a hand upon his arm, whispered something in his ear, and succeeded in bringing a smile to the eyes that had begun to darken at the Mexican's insolence. Yielding to the other's remonstrance he dismounted lightly from his horse, and said, pleasantly, "You need have no fears, my friend; we pay our way, even in advance, if required. Give us and our horses a night's lodging, and name your own price."

At this, the surly host brightened up; beckoned a ragged urchin from the rear of the house, and gave him an order in bad Spanish.

The boy led the wearied horses to a dilapidated shed close at hand. Hither the light-haired stranger followed, detached a pair of well-filled carpet-bags from his horse, and tossing the boy a small silver coin, walked leisurely back to the house. He seemed to have forgotten his momentary annoyance, and whipped the shrubs carelessly with his riding-switch as he walked, humming the end of an old tune with an air of perfect ease and security.

Both the travelers were damp and chilled, a passing shower having given them a sharp sprinkling an hour or two before; and the fair one, expressing a desire to change his upper garments, was shown into a small side-room formed by the elbow of the building—a room comparatively detached from the rest of the house being connected with it only by a short, dark, and dirty passage. It was meagerly furnished, containing little more than a bed and two rickety articles of furniture that might pass for chairs or stools. While he is removing his wet clothing, we will take a view of the two men left together in the front part of the cabin.

The Mexican was the first to speak; he looked covertly after the retreating stranger, then turning to his companion said, coolly and expectantly, "Well, señor?"

"What do you want?" said the dark stranger. "I said nothing."

The Mexican eyed him a moment, then shrugged his shoulders, and muttered sulkily, "You looked something, señor?"

The dark man's lips parted in a smile, disclosing his white and wolfish teeth. "I think I can trust you," said he slowly, after a pause.

"Yes, señor," replied the other, and both men glanced sideways at the door.

"You have a quiet little inn here," observed the stranger—"quiet and retired; no neighbor, eh?"

The Mexican nodded assent to the first observation, and shook his head negatively in answer to the second.

The other resumed: "Texas is a dangerous country for travelers, especially the Francisco route; accidents happen frequently I suppose, and no one can tell how. Is it not so, señor?"

The landlord again nodded vehemently, and his little eyes gleamed with anticipation.

"For instance," resumed the traveler, "we are too far east for roaming Indians, or grizzly bears; but a man might readily have a quarrel with half a dozen marauding Mexicans, and be left with a knife in his ribs, eh?"

The landlord looked dubious at this, and hinted that half a dozen was a large number.

"Do not alarm yourself, my friend," said the traveler, with another wolfish smile; "one Mexican will serve my turn. I speak of what might be. Such an accident might happen in a story, might it not?"

The landlord thought such an accident might easily occur to a traveler, and would sound well—very well—in a story. "Good!" continued the other; "you are a man of intelligence, and I am about

to make you an offer. Silver is none too plenty on the plains I suspect; how would you like to earn fifty dollars—solid silver coin?"

The offer appeared to dazzle the Mexican. His mouth gaped eagerly, and he clasped his hands in speechless suspense.

"All that I shall require you to do in return for this sum," said the other, smiling wolfishly as before, "is to forget whatever happens here to night. Mind, I don't affirm positively that anything will happen; but if unforeseen circumstances should occur—if the gentleman, my companion, should meet with an accident—you are to remember nothing. From first to last all is to be as if it had never occurred. You agree?"

"My memory has been a bad one from a child," replied the landlord; "it is in our family, I think. My father had a bad memory—a very bad memory, señor. I am his son in all things. The silver is mine."

"Not yet my friend," said the traveler, tranquilly. "If the señor, my friend, should lose his life in an unhappy quarrel, he must have lodgings for good, and all at your expense. You can handle a spade, I hope?"

The worthy host smiled assent. He had been educated to dig. His father before him was a digger. The prairie soil was soft and free to all who chose to occupy. No lease required no questions asked.

"It is well," said the dark-bearded fellow, in a tone of satisfaction. My friend shall have a life interest in the soil. We are agreed. Now let us have our supper!" And while it was preparing the pair of worthies were rejoined by the unsuspecting object of their treachery.

Half an hour later the travelers were seated at a rude table, discussing the merits of supper, the host having left the room in obedience to a glance from his superior. The two conversed freely of their affairs, and a listener might have gathered that the light stranger was a Mr. Guy Somers, and that he had an important mission in San Antonio, namely, the accession to a handsome fortune, the legacy of a long absent brother, who had emigrated from the States years before, and dying of a virulent fever, had left his worldly all, to his only living relative, his brother Guy; and the other's name was Hickson, avowedly a trader and citizen of Sacramento. The two had scraped an acquaintance on the plains, and Hickson had improved it to such advantage that they had agreed to finish the journey together.

An hour passed in canvassing the events of the morrow; and fatigued with their long ride, the travelers retired.—Hickson was accommodated with an extemporized bed in one of the rooms, Somers sleeping in the room we have already mentioned. The highly seasoned Mexican viands having parched his palate, somers complained of thirst and asked for water. The host was sorry, but the cabin contained none; he had used the last to cook the travelers' supper, and the spring that supplied them was a mile distant. Yet, stay; there was some coffee left from the meal. So the coffee was brought, the cup hastily drained and Somers turned into the room with the remark, "What a villainous flavor that cup had! Bah! these Mexican abominations!"

The plot arranged by the two scoundrels was as simple as it was effective. The drug administered by the Mexican having taken effect, Hickson was to possess himself of Somers's papers, and push on for San Antonio; arrived at which place he could with their aid easily establish his supposed identity, Somers being a stranger to the authorities. Once in possession of the estate, he meant to convert it into ready funds, and start with his plunder for parts unknown. The Mexican left in charge of the drugged man was to see that his victim never left the house alive.

Guy Somers undressed and laid down; a few moments sufficed to make him conscious of a deadly languor and drowsiness; he struggled against it involuntarily. There was something horribly unnatural in the feeling. He raised himself on his elbow and peered around him; the dim flicker of the lamp still feebly lighted the miserable room, and he lay gazing at the flame until a strange confusion of sight and sense entirely overpowered him. In the doorway suddenly appeared two faces—Hickson's and the Mexican's. He strove to speak, but the power of utterance was gone, and he only could gaze with eyes dilating and brain on fire upon those two faces, familiar as his own; but merciful heaven, how distorted! What could it mean? Why should the eyes of the Mexican burn so deep into his own? Why should—come, come, this is a vision—a nightmare—We know that the impossible cannot exist—eh, friends?—the narrow walls of a room like this cannot close upon us—nor the ceiling undulate like the waves of a storm-tossed sea. Strange—strange!—pshaw, a new fact in science, perhaps—what's that you said? an eclipse of the sun, eh? Ah, yes—there it turns—the great fiery orb, with dark moving spots upon its flaming surface—how came we on the sea?—the ship rocks wildly—wildly—and the roaring of the waves is terrible—surging—crashing—whirling horror, a mist—a murmur—nothingness!

"Remember," said Hickson, counting

the last of the fifty pieces into the Mexican's hands, "remember, it must be done before daybreak! Dig deep and earn your money!"

We must now shift the scene to a solicitor's office in San Antonio. Seated around a covered table, upon which are strewn various deeds and sealed documents, is a group of gentlemen busily engaged in discussing the appropriation of an estate.

Two of them are trustees and executors of the will left by Hiram Somers, Esq., recently deceased. Prominent among the number is the solicitor himself; and opposite to him, nonchalant and insolent as ever, is a man in whom we recognize the black beard and wolfish smile of worthy Mr. Hickson. A pocket-book "Guy Somers" is in his hand, and a pair of half emptied saddle-bags lie on a chair beside him.

"As you perceive, Mr. Somers," says the solicitor, addressing Hickson, "the will names you as the only surviving relative of the deceased. In your letter of the 9th inst., you acknowledged our remittance of five hundred dollars on account."

"And sent a receipt," interrupted Hickson, blandly.

"And sent a receipt," acquiesced the lawyer. "Your letters here agree with our correspondence—memorandum seems to tally, and all correct and conclusive.—It only remains to draw up the forms, and you step comfortably into a handsome competency, sir. Permit me, Mr. Somers, to congratulate you!"

Mr. Somers, alias Hickson, bows and shows his teeth; the trustees and others crowd around and offer their felicitations. A sudden sound causes the heir to listen intently.

"What's that?" he asks, sharply.

Mr. Solicitor goes to the window and looks out.

"I heard nothing he replies; "nothing but the galloping of a horse."

"There are more than one," mutters Hickson; "It sounds like a regiment of cavalry!"

Another pause, during which the trustees renew their chat, the solicitor leaves the window, and the pens of the clerks rattle furiously over the parchments that are to enrich a villain. Again Hickson starts and listens; the sound has become louder and clearer; the galloping of horses urged to their utmost speed.

Hickson was right. There was more than one.

"Some one in a deuce of a hurry!" observed one of the trustees.

"A Government dispatch, most likely," suggests the solicitor. "We are ready, gentlemen. Mr. Somers, your name to this document, if you please."

Mr. Solicitor hands the pen, and then spreads out a newly-filled deed. The trustees sign one by one. As the last name is written, a confused murmur of voices is heard without, footsteps in the yard below, a hurried tramp upon the stairs.

"Your signature, Mr. Somers," says the solicitor. "We are waiting."

But Hickson does not take the proffered pen. He trembles. His face is deadly pale. He utters a cry in which horror and rage are strangely blended. All regard him with surprise, and, following his riveted gaze perceive, for the first time, a pale face in the doorway—a handsome, resolute face, with a profusion of auburn hair, and a pair of grey eyes fixed reproachfully upon the shrinking Hickson, who gazes in return and gnashes his teeth, the embodiment of a hunted wolf at bay—a human wolf turning upon his hunters.

"Who is this man?" bursts in general exclamation from every mouth.

"Ask that man," thunders the intruder, striding into the room.

"An impostor—a madman!" ejaculated Hickson, between his teeth. "A miserable relative of mine, who is the scourge of my life—an insane wretch, gentleman, escaped from an asylum, and assuming my name! You shall hear him presently," he adds, with a desperate effort, as a gleam of hope shoots to his eyes at the ingenious thought.

The stranger advances a step.

"Gentleman," he begins, "my name is Guy Somers, brother to the man whose will you are about to execute. This man is a liar, and a villain—an impostor in act, a murderer at heart! I have the proofs of what I say, and you shall see them!"

Past the astonished group the stranger strides to his saddle-bags, and plunging in his hand produces a leather case, unlocks it, and handing to the solicitor a photographic portrait of himself, a speaking likeness—points to the signature at the bottom—"Guy Somers, New York, 1863."

There is a general start—a cry of baffled rage and hate—a rush to the door; but at that moment half a dozen rough-sun-furn forms in hunting-shirts and homespun; they press into the room with stern, avenging faces, and the wolf is caged—raging and foaming, struggling with the strong arms that hold him, but caught and pinioned.

A few moments sufficed to establish the identity of Guy, and explain his unexpected presence. Left alone with his victim, the Mexican had set about his

hideous task. Afraid that the blood might betray him if he used the knife, he resolved to bury Somers as he lay in the death-like stupor in which the reader left him. The grave was dug, and the poor man was dragged from the house, when the timely arrival of a party of scouts had interrupted the villain, and prevented his fiendish purpose.

Caught in the very act of murder, the wretch confesses his treachery, revealed the whole plot, and was summarily lynched by the indignant scouts—who, by the aid of Indian antidotes, restored our hero to consciousness and bore him company to San Antonio, where, as the reader has seen, he arrived most opportunely. The drug he had taken was narcotic, but not poisonous. Under good treatment, he entirely recovered, took possession of his property, rewarded his friends, the scouts, and lived to see the body of Hickson strangled in prison by his own suicidal act.

Adventures of a Crow.

A FEW weeks since a crow that had been driven by stress of weather to find shelter in the steamship Colorado, of Williams & Guion's line, refused to leave with the others, and devoted himself to rat-catching. Perched on a beam he would silently await the coming of a rat, and then descending with swift, noiseless flight, one stroke of his beak on the skull of the rodent would end the matter. It was supposed that when he came near the coast of Ireland he would fly back to his native soil, and Capt. Freeman allowed him the fullest liberty, being too much an American to enslave even a bird. But to his pleasure, and to the unalloyed delight of the crew, the bird which seemed agitated as they drew near to Cape Clear, after fluttering into the rigging of the mainmast and hopping distractedly up and down the ratlines, at length made up its mind and descended to the deck, evidently determined to remain on board the Colorado.

The crow, on the arrival of the vessel at Liverpool, stuck closely to Capt. Freeman, and perched itself on his shoulder, in which position it went to his house.—There it domiciled itself after sundry battles with the cat and terrier, in which it came off victorious, jumping on their backs and pecking their heads in a way that would quickly have despatched them had they not been rescued. When Capt. Freeman visited the ship in the course of the day, the crow took up its quarters there permanently, and has remained ever since. He has also had a misadventure, through its habit of pilfering, having stolen a box containing two dozen anti-bilious pills from a passenger's stateroom, every one of which it triumphantly swallowed. Every one thought it would die, and the bereaved passenger, an irritable old gentleman, was delighted; but the crow triumphed over his enemy by a feeble croak, and shortly afterward picked up rapidly, and was at length itself again.

When Capt. Freeman arrived in New York, the bird remained on board as usual.

Old Judge B., of New Hampshire was what Artemus Ward would have called a "sociable cuss" of the bench, and was noted for claiming acquaintance with any one whose appearance happened to please him. Entering a crowded car on the Boston and Maine Road one day his honor found the only unoccupied seat to be by the side of a smartly-dressed and rather good-looking young woman. Ascertaining that the seat was not engaged, the judge settled himself comfortably in it, and turning with his accustomed bland fatherly smile to his fair companion, said:

"Your face seems familiar to me, my dear; I think I must know you."

"I should think you might," said the unknown, in a hoarse, whisky, contralto voice, turning a vindictive pair of eyes on the astonished judge. "I should think you might; you sent me to the House of Correction for three months last winter, you infernal old scoundrel!"

The judge did not press his claim for acquaintance any further in that quarter.

The story of the dandy who showed how much art succeeded force by separating two fighting dogs by clapping his snuff-box to their noses; is capped by the landlord of the inn at Dalnacardoch, Scotland, quite an original in his way.—In winter a number of the neighboring shepherds assembled at his house to drink, crack jokes, and while away the long nights. Sometimes they get quarrelsome. When a fray is brewing, our hero puts a bit of Cayenne pepper in a bit of brown paper, makes the tongs red hot, lifts the packet with them, and holds it at the door. The result is magical. An inveterate sneezing and coughing commences, which is instantly succeeded by a rush to the door and a break up of the company.

At length," said an unfortunate man, who had been ruined by vexatious lawsuits, "at length I have found happiness, for I am reduced to necessity—and that is the only thing I know of which has no law."

There are nearly 7,000 French Canadians employed in the factories and work-shops in the State of N. Y.