

A Texan Adventure.

A SHORT TIME before the war broke out, I was practicing law in Galveston, Texas.

Important business called me to a small town named Fairfield, situated about seventy miles north of Austin. I went from Galveston to Austin by rail, and, purchasing a horse there, performed the rest of my journey on horseback. When I reached Fairfield, I found the town in a stage of great excitement; a horrible murder had been committed there.

A young lady and gentleman had disappeared, and from circumstances connected with their disappearance, it was evident they had been murdered, and their bodies thrown into the river.

The supposed murderer had been arrested; he was a young man named Archie Raynor, the only son of a widow, and, strange to say, had been the betrothed lover of Jessie Emory, the murdered girl. The circumstances that had led to his arrest, were as follows:

Charles Harris, the young man who had been murdered with Miss Emory, had been a rival of Raynor, but Jessie had loved the latter, and had repulsed the offers of Harris. On the evening of their disappearance, Harris and she had been seen together by the side of the river; and, as she did not come home, her parents became alarmed, and search being made for her, on going to the place where they had been seen, they were horrified at seeing, lying on the ground, her scarf stained with blood. The earth showed signs of a desperate struggle; pools of blood stained the grass, and a crimson trail led to the water's edge, showing that the murderer had cast his victims into the stream.

On further search a knife, stained with blood, was found; the initials "A. R." were graven on the blade, and it was recognized by several as belonging to Raynor, and several persons testified to having met him that evening near the place where the murder had been committed. He was arrested, but declared that he was innocent. Jealousy was the supposed cause; his mother was nearly heartbroken, and it was said that if he was convicted, it would send her to her grave. On the evening after my arrival, I was sitting in my private room in the hotel, when the clerk entered and said that a lady wished to see me on important business.

"Send her up," I said, wondering who it could be.

He retired, and in a short time a lady dressed in black, and deeply veiled, entered. I placed a chair for her and she sat down, and throwing back her veil, said:

"You are a lawyer, are you not?"

"I am."

"I am the mother of Archie Raynor, the young man who is charged with murder," said she, "and I have come to see if you will consent to defend him at his approaching trial. Oh! sir, if you have a mother, think of her, and think what her feelings would be to see her only child, her sole stay and support, in a prison cell, with an awful doom hanging over his head. Oh! sir, I know that my son is innocent. I know that he, who is so kind and gentle to all, would not stain his soul with murder. He has told me that he is innocent, and he never told me a lie. But come with me and see him. Do not refuse a mother that poor boon!"

I thought of the matter over a few moments, and then decided to go with her and see the young man. We left the hotel and went to the jail; she introduced me to the jailer as her son's lawyer, and he, taking down a bunch of keys, showed us into the young man's cell. The prisoner, a noble looking man, was sitting on the side of his pallet, with his face buried in his hands.

He started up as we entered, and embraced his mother affectionately. She turned to me and said:

"This is Mr. Clifton, a lawyer from Galveston. I have engaged him to defend you, my dear boy."

He shook hands with me, and in a short time his mother said: "I will now leave Mr. Clifton and you together, and I am sure that on hearing your story, he will see that you are innocent."

She then took her departure, and I asked him to tell me all the circumstances connected with the affair.

"Well, on the night of their disappearance, I did not see Jessie. I was to have met her by the river, but I was prevented by business from getting there until near dark, and then I could not find her, so concluding she had gone home; I went to my home, and being tired, went to bed at once. I slept till near twelve o'clock, and was then awakened by the constable, and accused of murdering Jessie Emory. I protested my innocence, but was told I would have that to prove, and I was brought here; that is all I know."

"But what about the knife?" asked I.

"Oh! I had forgotten. I lost that knife four days ago, and it must have been found by the murderer."

"Were Miss Emory and Harris friends?" asked I.

"No, sir. When she refused his offer

of marriage, he told her that she would some day repent it, and she has avoided him ever since. What surprises me," added he, "is that they should have been seen together. There is some mystery about it that I can't see through. There is one thing that I have thought of since I have been here. It may surprise you, but I cannot divest myself of the belief that Jessie is alive, and has been carried off by Harris, for he is bad enough for anything, and I know that he has sold some property he had in the town, and he has told several persons that he was going north. I think he has carried her off, and that he had found my knife, and stained it with blood so as to make people believe they had been murdered, and throw the guilt on me."

"By Jove! young man, I believe you are right. I will wager that is the case. Can you tell me where Harris is from?" asked I.

"From the northern part of the State, I think, but I am not sure."

After a few more questions, I bade the young man keep a good heart, and I would do my best for him, and then I left the jail and went to the hotel, and going to the bar-room found the landlord, and entered into conversation with him about the murder.

"Did you know Harris?" I asked.

"Yes, quite well. I have known him three years."

"Of what disposition was he?"

"Awful passionate. I believe he never forgot an injury. I don't like to speak ill of the dead, but, to tell the truth, I never liked him. He had an evil look about him that always made me distrust him. He would stop at nothing to gain his ends."

"Where did he come from? Is he a native of this place?"

"No; he came from around Parkstown, San Jose county, about fifty miles north of here," answered he. "He told me the other day that he was going back there in a week or two, but there was no such thing as believing him."

The next morning early I went to the scene of the murder. I examined the ground carefully, and soon came to the conclusion that no struggle had taken place on the spot. It was all too scientifically laid out; the doers had been cunning, but they had overdone their part. The blood and marks on the earth were merely blinds. Any acute person could see that no struggle had taken place, and that the traces were but blinds. I noticed also, that all the footprints had been made by one pair of boots, and that the heels of these boots had nails driven into them in the shape of a heart; for in every print there, the mark was plainly to be seen. I was satisfied that Miss Emory had been carried off by Harris; so I resolved to proceed thus: To go to Parkstown, Harris' native place, and make efforts to find him, for I thought he would most likely have gone there with her.

I went at once to Mrs. Raynor's and told her what I intended to do, and telling her to be of good cheer, I bade her farewell, and went to the hotel. I borrowed a seven-shooter from the landlord, mounted my horse, and set off on my uncertain search.

The close of the first day's ride brought me to a little village, where I stayed all night. The next morning was a beautiful one, and I rode briskly over the prairie until noon, when I stopped at a solitary squatter's cabin and got dinner.

Here I was informed that Parkstown was about twenty-five miles distant. The prospect was not inviting; the day, from a bright and pleasant one, had become dark and lowering, and heavy clouds were gathering in the sky. But I determined to push on. The hospitable squatter gave me many directions as to the right road, and mounting my horse, I rode on until nightfall, when the storm that had long given token of its coming burst upon me in full fury. The rain fell in torrents; the lightning flashed, causing my horse to start and tremble, while the very earth was shaken by the terrific peals of thunder.

Bewildered by the blinding rain, I let the horse make its own way in the darkness, for I could not see the path; and on we went, stumbling and slipping, until I was suddenly startled by hearing the rushing sound of water, and before I could stop the horse, he was in the stream up to the girth. There was nothing to do but let him go on, which he did, walking slowly until he lost his depth, and was forced to swim. The current was strong, and I expected every moment that it would carry the noble animal away. But he struggled on, and soon touched bottom again, and with a snort rushed up the river's bank, and with renewed energy pushed on through the darkness.

I was now certain I had lost my way, and had made up my mind for a night in the woods, when to my great joy, I saw through the blinding rain, a light in the distance. With renewed hope I urged my horse on, and came to the house whence the light came. I drew up at the door and gave two or three loud raps with my whip. It was opened by a woman whose appearance did not impress me very favorably.

"I am seeking shelter. Can you lodge me for the night?"

"I guess so. Come in. Here, Sam, take this horse round to the stable and feed him."

Sam, a boy of about seventeen, led my horse away, and I followed the woman into the house, and going up to the fire, took off my overcoat, and drawing a chair up, sat down and dried myself at the generous blaze, while the woman prepared some supper. Looking around, while sitting at the fire, I saw for the first time a beautiful young girl sitting in a corner. Her face was pale, and her eyes had a frightened look in them that filled me with pity. The elder woman, looking around, saw that I was looking at the girl, and said sharply:

"Go up stairs, gal, and stay there till I call ye."

She obeyed and went up stairs. Shortly after, the door was thrown open, and five men armed to the teeth strode in. Four of them were rough, ugly-looking villains; the fifth was a short, thick-set young man, and looked rather more refined than the others, but there was a look of the devil in his face that I did not like. They looked inquiringly at the woman, on seeing me, and she said:

"He is a traveller that has lost his way in the storm."

"Where is the girl?" asked the young man of whom I have spoken.

"Up stairs," answered she, and turning to me, added,

"Come into the next room, mister, and I'll fetch ye yer supper."

I followed her into the next room, and she drew a table into the middle of the floor, and spreading a coarse cloth on it, went into the outer room again. I began to feel rather uneasy at my situation, for I did not like the looks of the men. I examined my revolver, and determined to be careful.

Soon the woman entered, accompanied by the girl, and placed some corn bread, a plate of fried ham, and some coffee on the table. I noticed that the girl looked at me in a peculiar manner, as if desirous of speaking to me. At last, as she poured out the coffee, she slipped into my hand a small piece of paper. She then went out, and was followed by the woman. I unfolded the paper, and read the following:

"Do not touch the coffee; it is drugged. You may eat the bread and meat. These people are robbers, and intend to rob and murder you. I am kept here against my will. My name is Jessie Emory. I was stolen away from my home by a man named Harris. If you will aid me in escaping, I will contrive to saddle two horses and tie them outside, and if we can once get to them, we are safe. We will have to go through the outer room to escape, for there is only one door. Contrive some means to let me know what you intend to do."

I was never so amazed in my life.— Though I had thought it strange to see so beautiful a maiden living with such people as these, yet the thought that she was the missing Jessie Emory had never crossed my brain. I tore a sheet from my notebook, and wrote these words:

"Have the horses ready, and I will do my best in aiding you to escape."

I threw the drugged coffee into the ashes and hearing the woman coming, I raised the cup to my lips as if in the act of emptying it, and set it on the table just as she entered. She gave a quick look at the empty cup, and I noticed a gleam of satisfaction flit over her face. I gave her the cup, and said:

"Your coffee is good. Please fill my cup again."

She called Jessie, and told her to bring the coffee-pot. She brought it, and while filling my cup I managed to slip the note into her hand. She went out with the woman. I disposed of my fresh coffee in the same manner as the first, and finishing my supper, put on my overcoat, drew a chair up to the fire, and waited for Jessie to make her appearance. The robbers in the next room were very quiet. I was fully awake to the dangerous character of our enterprise. We would have to make our way through the outer room, in the face of five men each armed to the teeth; but I calculated on taking them by surprise, and I knew that, if by a sudden rush we could get outside and reach the horses, we could bid them defiance. I had sat a short time, when I heard whispers in the outer room. I walked cautiously to the door and placed my ear to the key-hole, and heard the woman say:

"Gal, go in an' see if he's asleep yet."

The door opened, and Jessie entered.

"Are you ready?" whispered she.

"Yes," answered I, cocking my revolver. I had placed my left arm around her waist and whispered:

"Cling to me. If I fall, run for the horses and try to escape. Now!" and throwing open the door, we sprang into the outer room. Harris sprang to his feet and yelled:

"Shoot him! Curse him, shoot him! He's trying to run off with the girl!"

"Stand aside!" cried I, raising my revolver.

The other men ran to get between us and the door. Harris drew a bowie-knife, and flourishing it, yelled:

"Drop her, or I'll kill you!"

Quick as thought I took aim at him and fired. The bullet crashed through his brain, and he fell to the floor. The others drew back, and we ran across the room, flung open the door, and sprang out. The woman yelled fiercely:

"After them, ye cowards! Shoot him down! Don't let him escape!"

I cried to Jessie:

"Run for the horses! I will keep them back. Run!"

The brave girl obeyed me, and ran to where the horses were tied. One of the villains fired at me, and the ball went through my hat. I fired, but with a better aim than he. The ball entered his breast and throwing up his hands, he fell forward on the ground. I turned and ran to the horses. Jessie had untied them, and was mounted on one. I sprang on the other, and we galloped away. The ruffians gave a yell of rage as they saw us escaping, and fired several shots after us, some of which whistled rather close to us, but we were soon out of their reach.

The storm had ceased, but the night was very dark, and we rode on, not knowing where we were going. But luck attended us for we soon struck a beaten road, which we followed all night, and as the sun rose in the morning, we rode into Parkstown, the town to which I was going when I so providentially lost my way. We went at once to the only hotel the town afforded, and I told Jessie of her lover's imprisonment on the charge of murdering her. She said that Harris had told her so, but she had not believed him, as she thought that he said so for the purpose of frightening her. She was greatly excited on hearing that it was so, and wished to proceed at once to Fairfield; but I insisted on her remaining at Parkstown a day to rest. She then told me her adventures.

She had gone to the river for the purpose of meeting Raynor, when Harris met her. She was going on, when he stopped her and said he wished to beg her pardon for the words he had used to her. He said he was going away from Fairfield, and he wished to leave none but friends behind him. She, deceived by his pretended penitence, readily forgave him, and as it was nearly dark, turned homewards, he accompanying her.

As they were walking towards the village, he suddenly seized her, and pressed a handkerchief saturated with chloroform against her mouth and nostrils, and she knew no more. When she regained her senses it was broad daylight, and she was in a boat, going down the river, with Harris and two of the men whom I had seen at the cabin. They went a great distance down the river, and then landing, were met by another of the gang, who was awaiting them with horses. She was placed on one and taken to the cabin in the woods. Here she was kept a prisoner by Harris, who offered her no insult, evidently hoping to win her consent to their marriage without force.

After hearing her story, I went to the office of the Justice of the Peace and told him the circumstances, and a body of men went at once to the place, but the birds had flown. Two graves were found, showing that my last shot had proved fatal.

After a day's rest, we mounted our horses and set out for Fairfield, which we reached in two days. I need not describe the joyful meeting of the parents and child, who had been so strangely separated. Archie Raynor was instantly released from custody and restored to the arms of his now happy mother, and in three weeks he was married to Jessie Emory, I being groomsmen, and the dearest friends I now have, are Archie and Jessie Raynor.

Danger of Carrying Concealed Weapons.

The Evansville (Ind.) Journal is responsible for the following.

"There is absolutely no safe way to carry a pistol except to carry it without a charge. A young man lost his wife, recently, by trusting to the directions of a friend who told him how he could carry a pistol without danger."

"His Mary Jane resided some distance from the city, and he had a great horror of dogs, so he put his revolver in the hip pocket of his Sunday clothes, one evening, when he started to see her. The prospective mother-in-law met him at the door and told him to take the rocking chair, and as he did so, the report of firearms caused the old lady to scream and fall to the floor, while a fire in the rear claimed Charles Henry's attention, and consumed a portion of his best doek in 'smalls.' The old lady swooned; the girl ran in, forgetting her disordered dress and hair, and followed her mother's example. The old man and his double-fisted boys ran in, and, seeing mother and daughter lying on the floor, went for that young man, and he went through the window, carrying sash and glass with him as he went. A big dog, aroused by the noise, made for the fugitive, who in his turn made for the city, about a mile, and a half or two miles distant, emptying his revolver at the dog as he went. The dog was dead for that young man in more than one sense; for he dares not approach the house now, lest the old man may revenge the loss of his dog on him. The old man says he will never forgive the murderer of his dog. If any one asks that young man how he likes Mary Jane, he says that her nerves are too delicate for a country girl, and betrays an anxiety to drop the subject; but he confided to a friend that in sitting down the hammer of his revolver caught upon the chair, and it was in that way discharged, whereupon that house and his clothes became too hot for him."

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