

[From the Missouri Democrat.]
A Lawyer's Adventure.

We presume our Illinois readers will readily expand the town C— mentioned into the following sketch into Carlyle:

About three or four years ago, more or less, I was practicing law in Illinois in a pretty large circuit. I was called on one day in my office, in the town of C—, by a very pretty woman, who, not without tears, told me her husband had been arrested for [horse-stealing]. She wished to retain me for the defense. I asked her why she did not go to Judge B., an ex-senator of the United States, whose office was in the same town. I told that I was a young man at the bar, &c. She mournfully said that he had asked a retaining fee above her means, and besides did not want to touch the case, for her husband was suspected of belonging to a gang of horse-thieves and counterfeiters, whose head-quarters were on Moore's prairie.

I asked her to tell me the whole truth of the matter, and if it was true that her husband did belong to such a band?

"Ah, sir," said she, "a better man at heart than my George never lived; but likes cards and drink, and I am afraid that they made do what he never would have if he had not drunk. I fear that it can be proved that he had the horse; he didn't steal it; another did and passed it to him."

I didn't like the case. I knew that there was a great dislike to the gang located where she named, and feared to risk the case before a jury. She seemed to observe my intention to refuse the case and burst into tears.

I never could see a woman weep without feeling like a weak fool myself. If it hadn't been for eyes brightened by "pearly tears," (blast the poets that made them to come in fashion by praising 'em,) I'd never have been caught in the lasso of matrimony. And my would-be-client was pretty. The handkerchief that hid her streaming eyes didn't hide her ripe lips, and her snowy bosom rose and fell like a white gull in a gale of wind at sea.— I took the case and she gave me the particulars.

The gang of which he was not a member, had persuaded him to take the horse. He knew the horse was stolen, and like a fool acknowledged it when he was arrested. Worse still—he had trimmed the horse's tail and mane to alter his appearance, and the opposition could prove it.

The trial came on. I worked hard to get a jury of ignorant men, who had more heart than brain; who, if they could not fathom the depths of argument, or follow the labyrinthine mazes of the law could feel for a young fellow in a bad fix, a weeping, pretty wife, nearly broken hearted and quite distracted. Knowing the use of "effect," I told her to dress in deep mourning and bring her little cherub of a boy, only three years old, into court, and sit as near her husband as the officer would let her. I tried that game once in a murder case and a weeping wife and sister made a jury render a verdict against law, evidence and the judges charge, and saved a fellow that ought to

have been hung as high as Haman.

The prosecution opened very bitterly; inweighed against thieves and counterfeiters, who had made the land a terror to strangers and travelers, and who had robbed every farmer in the region of their finest horses. It introduced witnesses, and proved all and more than I feared it would.

The time came for me to rise for defense.— Witnesses I had none. But I determined to make an effort, only hoping so to interest the judge and jury as to secure recommendation to gubernatorial clemency and a light sentence. So I painted this picture: A young man entered into life, wedded to an angel; beautiful in person, possessing every gentle and noble attribute. Temptation was before and all around him. He kept a tavern. Guests there were many; it was not for him to inquire into their business; they were all well-dressed; made large bills and paid promptly. At an unguarded hour when he was insane with the liquor they urged upon him, he had deviated from the path of rectitude. The demon of alcohol had reigned in his brain; and it was the first offence. Mercy pleaded for another chance to save him from ruin. Justice did not require that his young wife should go down sorrowing to the grave, and that the shadow of disgrace and the taunt of a felon father should cross the path of that sweet child. O, how earnestly did I plead for them. The woman wept, the husband did the same; the judge fidgeted and rubbed his eyes; the jury melting. If I could have closing speech he would have been cleared; but the prosecutor had the close, and threw ice on the fire I had kindled. But they did not quite put it out.

The judge charged according to law and evidence, but evidently leaned on the side of mercy. The jury found a verdict of guilty, but unanimously recommended the prisoner to the mercy of the court. My client was sentenced to the shortest imprisonment the court was empowered to give, and both jury and court signed a petition to the Governor for an unconditional pardon, which has since been granted, but not before the following incident occurred:

Some three months after this, I received an account for collection from a wholesale house in New York. The parties to collect from were hard ones, but they had property, and before they had an idea of the trap laid, I had the property which they were about to assign before they broke, under attachment. Finding I was neck ahead, and bound to win, they “caved in,” and “forked over” three thousand seven hundred and ninety-four dollars and eighteen cents (per memorandum book) in good money. They lived in Shawneetown, about 35 or 40 miles southeast of Moore’s prairie.— I received the funds just after bank opening, but other business detained me till after dinner. I then started for C—, intending to go as far as the village of Mount Vernon that night.

I had gone along ten or twelve miles, when I noticed a splendid team of horses attached to a light wagon, in which were seated four men, evidently of the high strung order. They swept as if to show how easily they could do it. They shortened in, allowed me to come up with them, and hailing me, asked me to “wet,” or in other words, diminish the contents of a jug of old rye they had aboard; but I excused myself with the plea that I had plenty on board. They asked me how far I was going. I told them as far as Mount Vernon, if my horse didn’t tire out. They mentioned a pleasant tavern ten or twelve miles ahead, as a nice stopping place and then drove on.

I did not like the look of those fellows, nor their actions. But I was bound to go ahead. I had a

brace of revolvers and a nice knife; my money was not in my valise or my sulky, but in my belt about my body. I drove slow in hopes that they would go on, and I should see them no more. It was nearly dark when I saw a tavern sign ahead. At the same time I saw their wagon stood before the door. I would have pressed on, but my horse needed rest. I hauled up, and a woman came to the door. She turned as pale as a sheet when she saw me—she did not speak, but with a meaning look she put her finger on her lips, and beckoned me in; she was the wife of my late client.

When I entered, the party recognized me, and hailed me as an old travelling friend, and asked me to drink. I respectfully, but firmly, declined to do so.

“By G—d, you shall drink or fight!” said the nosiest of the party.

“Just as you please; drink I shall not!” said I, purposely showing the butt of a Colt, which kicks six times in rapid succession.

The party interposed, and very easily quelled the assailant. One offered me a cigar, which I reluctantly refused, but a glance from the woman induced me accept. She advanced and proffered me a light, and in doing so slipped a note into my hand, which she must have written a moment before. Never shall I forget the words. They were:

“Beware, they are members of the gang.—They mean to rob and murder you! Leave soon; I will detain them!”

I did not feel comfortable just then, but tried to do so.

“Have you any room to put up my horse?” I asked turning to the woman.

“What, are you not going on to-night?” asked one of the men; we are.”

“No,” said I, “I shall stay here to-night.”

“We’ll all stay then, I guess, and make a night of it!” said another of the cut-throats.

“You’ll have to up your own horse—here’s a lantern,” said the woman.

“I am used to it,” I said. “Gentlemen, excuse me a minute; I’ll join you in a drink when I come in.”

“Good on your head. More whiskey, old gal,” shouted they.

I went out, glanced at their wagon; it was old fashioned, and “linch pins” secured the wheels. To take out my knife and pry one from the fore and hind wheels was about the work of an instant, and I threw them as far off in the darkness as I could. To untie my horse and dash off was but the work of a moment. The road lay down a steep hill, but my lantern lighted me somewhat.

I had hardly got under full headway, when I heard a yell from the party I had so unceremoniously left. I put whip to my horse. The next moment with a shout they started. I threw my light away, and left my horse to pick his way. A moment later I heard a crash—a horrible shriek. The wheels were off. Then came the rush of the horses tearing along with the wreck of the wagon. Finally they seemed to fetch up in the wood. One or two shrieks I heard as I swept on, leaving them far behind. For some time I hurried my horse—you'd better believe I "rid"! It was a little after mid-night when I got to Mount Vernon.

The next day I heard that Moore's Prairie team had run away, and that two men out of the four had been so badly hurt that their lives were despaired of. But I didn't cry—my clients got their money; and I didn't travel that road any more.

Bradford Reporter, July 16, 1857