

A Singular Story
Marriage, Murder, Desertion and
Miraculous Detection

A Girl in Male Attire Crosses the Ocean
To Find Her Father—Success of Her
Mission—A Romance of Real Life

Perhaps the most romantic and startling story of facts that has ever come to light in Iowa was related to your correspondent to-day, and which is certainly unknown to the citizens of Dubuque. My informant is one of the oldest and most influential citizens of this city. In answer to the well-known reporter's query, "What's new?" he said: "I have a long and interesting story to tell you, and you will be the first newspaper man to whom it has ever been told by me." Leaning back in his cushioned chair and placing his heels on his old-fashioned looking desk, he told the following story: Away back in the early days of Dubuque a family, consisting of man and wife and one daughter, came here from St. Louis. Their names will be withheld from for the present, but may be given later. The husband and father engaged in the business of a miner, and for a time was quite successful. He was rather shabbily dressed, but showed signs of refinement and education in youth. He was a Frenchman. After a while he lost what little money he had in the mining business, and became almost destitute. Dubuque in those days was a dreary wilderness, built mainly of frame shanties, and populated for the most part by Indians. He, without any prospects of making a living for himself and family, became a wreck, bordering upon insanity, the sequel of which was his being found dangling from a rope in his own room, cold in death, having committed suicide. His poor widow and orphan girl were prostrated with grief; the former fainted at the ghastly sight and remained in a comatose condition for more than two days, at the end of which time preparations were completed for the interment of the supposed dead body. It was even inclosed in a casket, when the startling discovery was made that the person was only in a swoon. It is needless to say that the supposed lifeless form was immediately removed and such restoratives as were procurable were quickly administered by willing hands. She rapidly recovered, and was soon in her former state of health, but, as I have made known, in a very destitute condition, and how to make out a living for herself and child added much to her distress. Eventually she obtained a situation as a "maid-of-all-work." In addition to this she taught her child how to read, write, etc. Years rolled by and the child grew to be a young lady, earning her own living. Dubuque was at this time rapidly growing. Immigrants poured in from all directions, enlarging Dubuque to quite a village.

Among the new arrivals was a boy who emigrated from Europe at the age of eighteen to seek a livelihood in the Great West. He possessed a remarkable ambition to rise in the world. He commenced on a starvation salary, and was afterward employed in a little grocery store, where he soon became a partner in the business. About this time he met and fell in love with the young lady I have just referred to. Though poorly clad, she was exceptionally pretty and quite intelligent. This brief acquaintance was only an introduction to a long and clandestine courtship which followed, a description of which is unnecessary. Suffice it to say it did not deviate much from the "rules" in use at the present time. It was of a fourteen months' duration and ended, as

the average play does, in a happy marriage, though his happiness, it must be said, was short-lived. Five years swiftly passed—the mother-in-law during this time died and three bright little children were the fruits of that period of conjugal life. Two were boys and one a girl. When the youngest was only three months old the father became engaged in a quarrel with his partner in business, during which he, unintentionally, it is said, dealt him a blow on the forehead, wounding him in such a manner as to cause his death a few weeks after. He was held for trial for murder—the trial lasting fourteen days—and convicted of manslaughter, and was accordingly sentenced to life imprisonment at hard labor. This was a terrible blow to the young wife and mother, and for a time fears of her becoming insane were entertained, but she braved the billowy sea of grief and soon landed safe on the shores of good health. The imprisoned life was soon changed to a free one, for after a life and death struggle he succeeded in releasing himself from the prison walls. His escape was not detected for several days, and his whereabouts was unknown. A diligent search was kept up for some time, but no trace of him could be found. We will follow him, however. Immediately after his escape he proceeded to New York, where he took passage for Dublin, and arrived there five weeks later, this being the time it took in those days to sail across the Atlantic. His arrival was greeted warmly by his many friends and relations, as they were completely ignorant of his past career. Communication with his wife and family was necessarily cut off, as such action might possibly lead to his discovery and capture. We next find him employed in an extensive linen factory on Sackville street, holding the responsible position of foreman of the entire establishment. His integrity, ambition of furthering his employer's business interests and honesty in discharge of his duties in that position gained for him the confidence of his employers, and he was soon made general manager of the concern at an enormous salary. The announcement of his marriage to the daughter of the senior member of the firm in question created quite a sensation, as they were, socially speaking, not suited for each other, she being of very high social standing in the metropolis of the great but little island, while on the other hand he was comparatively ignorant and obscure in that respect. This was the primary, if not the principal cause of frequent quarrels thereafter. Time passed, and two children were born to them.

We will now take a trip back to his former, or American, wife and children, from whom he was forced to part several years previous. After his escape from prison the news spread rapidly over the wires that a man answering his description was killed at Lancaster, Pa. This news was received as official by the authorities although the body had not been identified as the escaped convict. The poor woman also received the news as positive proof of her husband's terrible fate. Herself and family accordingly remained in mourning for over a year for a man who was then alive and who was to be untrue to his devoted wife and children. The expiration of several years of supposed widowed life brought back to light the great mystery and an awful tale.

On a cold December evening a tattered but intelligent looking boy apparently of sixteen summers, appeared at the door of her residence and politely asked for some eatables, saying he was on a long, fatiguing journey and without money. The request was readily granted, and after politely thanking her for her kindness and telling where he was from he took his leave. No more was heard of him or seen of him there.

The summer of 18—witnessed a grand steamboat excursion on the Mississippi from St. Louis. Among the large number aboard was the boy who appeared in Dubuque as an outcast, but who had now grown to respectable manhood under the rays of a Southern sun. As fate would have it,

the generous old lady who had befriended him when he was destitute was also aboard, accompanied by her daughter. He immediately recognized her, introduced himself, and an interesting conversation followed, in the course of which a pressing invitation was extended to him to pay them a visit in their Dubuque home. The invitation was accepted and a short time afterward fulfilled. It may, perhaps, seem strange, but it is nevertheless a fact, that the names of both parties remained a secret until the day of his visit. Imagine their position and the friendship that arose when the facts became known and the inquiry which followed may be termed the "key" to the deep mystery existing, the circumstances of which are already known to the reader. The scene following the young man's story of his early life, his parents, etc., beggars description, as it was now settled beyond a particle of doubt that the supposed dead husband and father was no other than the man before alluded to, and what is still more remarkable, the mysterious acquaintance proved to be his son, born to his illegal wife. He said that he left home because of his father's brutal treatment of his mother. A secret correspondence between the wronged woman in Dublin and her son in Dubuque ensued, when for the first time did her terrible position as an illegal wife become known to her. A pen picture of his grief and consternation on receipt of the news of this startling disclosure is beyond the writer's ability, it can be better imagined than described. Suffice it to say the meeting of herself and husband was by no means affectionate. The crisis comes at a later stage.

The correspondence was uninterruptedly carried on until the actual situation of all concerned was revealed, and in some unaccountable manner the United States authorities were made cognizant of the fact that an American convict and murderer had been discovered in Dublin. The Secretary of State made a prudent investigation of the case which resulted in establishing the true identity of the man in question, but for some reason or other his arrest was not demanded, consequently we have no more to add to this chapter. During this time his American wife and daughter were sorely afflicted and in a perplexed state of mind, not knowing whether to recognize the young man as an impostor, or endeavor to obtain the real facts in the ease. They chose the latter, and at once dispatched a letter to the address given by the informant, but no answer came. A second and a third was written with the same result. Many long and anxious days and sleepless nights were passed in vain.

Now that all efforts to communicate with him by letter were of no avail, another plan was concocted to carry out their purpose. The mother was growing old and feeble and unable to undergo the hardship and fatigue incident to a sea voyage, this being the only medium through which the proof of the young man's story could be ascertained. Not to be baffled, the daughter, who was only in her teens, made the sensational assertion that she would dispense with petticoats and don the pantaloons. This was accomplished, and she at once set out on her long and perilous journey, leaving the feeble mother to take care of herself, the other two children having died in the mean time. As she presented more of a masculine than feminine appearance her plan was very successful, but she ventured no familiarity with any of her "fellow men," although she dined and made her toilet in the same rooms as those occupied by the male passengers. After a long and tedious voyage she arrived in the beautiful and home-like city of Dublin. Her next exploit was to endeavor to procure employment at the establishment where her father was supposed to be employed. To this end many shrewd and ingenious inquiries, were made relative to the firm. The desired information being obtained, she at once appeared at the office, wearing male attire. Her application for a clerkship was made to an intelligent looking gentleman,

apparently thirty-five years old, who politely informed her that a good recommendation would be necessary before she could be employed, and adding that if such could be obtained he would be most happy to employ her. She departed discouraged and down-hearted, knowing that the required document could not be had in a strange city. She wandered several days about the streets and suburbs, and at last was inspired with a hopeful thought, and called upon a clergyman, to whom she told the entire story of her experience, etc., since leaving Dubuque. After due hesitation, he gave her a letter of recommendation. Returning with this, she was at once employed and worked faithfully for several weeks before she gained sight of her father. The meeting was an affecting one. She ran to him, threw her self at his feet, and cried out: "O, father! father! I'm your daughter and came from America to look for you." The scene will never be forgotten by the few who chanced to be present. A great sensation followed: the entire press of Dublin devoting several columns each day to comment and criticism on the male-female clerk. The illegal wife was now beyond all doubt as to her position, and immediately applied for a divorce, which was granted after considerable difficulty. The three children who were the fruits of their married life were claimed by her and granted by the court with the exception of the boy, who immigrated to America, who was given to the father. The glad tidings of the finding of the father were immediately dispatched to her mother in Dubuque, and for the first time in almost a quarter of a century, communication was opened between the legal husband and wife, which resulted in her emigration to the city of Dublin, where a few years of happy life were spent, when she died, and was shortly after followed to the shores of the unknown beyond by our hero. At the time of his death he was immensely rich, and willed a handsome fortune to our little heroine (his daughter), also half of his entire estate to his son who was the means of bringing about the happy end. But to the son's loss, he has never been heard of since. Should he be in existence still this little communication we hope will be the agent to establish some clue to his whereabouts, and convey to him the news of his good luck.

Of the wronged woman and her two daughters we have nothing to tell, for the reason that their lives from the time of our last sight of them here are entirely unknown to our informant, and as to the heroine, she is living that happiest life of woman, "an old maid," and at tributes this happiness to the pantaloons. —*Dubuque Cor. Minneapolis Tribune*

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