

A Just Retribution

A Wretch's Perfidy and a Young Girl's Infatuation—A Plot Which Was Partially Carried Out

Early on the morning of July 6, 1878, a carriage drove up to the Parker house, in Boston, from which alighted a young and handsome man. He gazed about him for a moment and then entered the coach. He had hardly seat himself when a young girl, scarcely nineteen, with a face as purely beautiful as a rose-blossom, approached the vehicle and seated herself beside the occupant within. The coach then [preceded] on its way through the city, until it reached a retired spot. Here it stopped, the two alighted and the driver was discharged. The girl was Kate Roberts, one of two daughters of a poor woman who, at that moment, lay dying of consumption in a room in the poorest section of Boston, and her companion was George Davis, a gambler.

Along a path the two walked, and, stopping before what appeared a gloomy-looking mansion, the man knocked. The door was opened and the two entered and were ushered into an ante-chamber, where stood a woman of harsh and forbidding features, and beside her was a man who purported to be the officiating clergyman. He opened some book, the ceremony was mumbled over in a strange indistinct manner, the ring was placed on the finger of the bride, the pair were pronounced man and wife, the book was closed, tucked under the man's arm, who, receiving his fee, immediately disappeared. From State to State the couple traveled, and the young wife soon discovered that her husband was a brute.

In the spring of 1859 Davis took up his abode in Cuba, and his treatment of his wife at this time had become more brutal than ever. Having established a gambling den in company with one Soares, in that part of Havana known as the Caldera, he began to prosper rapidly. A short time had elapsed when Davis' wife mysteriously disappeared, and though numerous theories were advanced as to her whereabouts, no definite clew was obtained.

Among the many rich planters residing in Havana was an old Spanish gentleman named Angelos Rio. He had two beautiful daughters, Angelique and Isadora. The former was a perfect type of the Spanish beauty, with lustrous hair, and speaking, sparkling orbs that flashed like diamonds when reflecting the sun's rays. Angelique had met Davis and had fallen madly in love with the fellow. When her father ascertained the fact he grew frantic with rage, but his action seemed only to spur the daughter on, until one morning Cuban society awoke to learn that the rich and beautiful Angelique had clandestinely married a gambler. As a revenge for the ingratitude of his daughter, Senor Rio disinherited her and willed his entire fortune to his daughter Isadora. It was shortly after this that he died.

Moved by sympathy for her sister, Isadora brought Angelique and her husband to the family mansion, where they continued to live in apparent happiness.

Senor Varlville, the famed lawyer of Havana, sat one morning in his office, when Isadora accompanied by her maid Mercita, entered, and with a winning gentleness, informed him that she desired him to draw up a new will for her, having decided, she said, to revoke all others. The

lawyer turned to his desk, and arranging his papers, awaited the necessary instructions. Isadora, with a singular inflection of determination running through her tones, spoke as follows:

“I, Isadora Rio, bequeath my entire estate, with all my personal effects, to my beloved sister, Mrs. Angelique Davis, of Havana, Cuba, making her sole executrix.”

The paper having been signed, witnessed and sealed, Isadora, in company with her maid, left the office. The difference between this last will and the former was that in the former she had bequeathed two-thirds of her estate to her sister and the remainder to Davis, besides making him one of her executors. She had satisfied herself that Davis was a villain at heart, though she kept the secret foolishly to herself.

On the night of April 9, 1880, the servants in the Rio mansion were startled by the report of a pistol, and following the direction of the sound, rushed to Isadora’s boudoir, where they found their mistress lying dead upon the floor with blood flowing from a wound in the head. The police were notified and detectives began an immediate search for a clew to the assassin.

Davis was found in his room, apparently asleep, but the whereabouts of Angelique were at the time unknown. The belief that she had met with foul play from the same source began to be entertained by many, while the officers were beginning to suspect her of some complicity in the crime.

In this condition of affairs she entered the room, her hair disheveled and her dress almost torn to shreds. When informed of what had occurred she fell into convulsions and would no sooner return to consciousness than to again relapse into delirium. On the following morning she was arrested on the charge of murdering her sister.

In her evidence at the trial she stated that on the previous night, while walking in the garden adjoining the mansion, she was seized from behind by some unknown person, and in struggling to free herself was felled insensible to the ground. Upon recovering consciousness she made her way to the house, and there learned of the murder of her sister.

The fact was elicited that she had, on the night of the murder quarreled with her sister. This was an important link in the chain of direct evidence, while the circumstantial evidence was equally as important. Her story of her absence at the time of the murder was considered a weak fabrication. The pistol with which the murder was committed, and which was identified as belonging to her, was found on the veranda near where Isadora was murdered; her handkerchief and neck-scarf lay in the garden, but a few yards from where the shot was fired; footprints answering hers were found in the soft mold of the garden, and a pair of gaiters belonging to her were discovered hidden beneath some underbrush. The evidence was overwhelming—so the jury thought; for, after a short absence, they returned a verdict of guilty. She was sentenced for life, and taken from the courtroom insensible. Though regaining consciousness, it was only to enter into the delirium of brain fever.

Angelique lay in the hospital ward, her death momentarily expected. Davis, as an executor in one of the wills made, determined to expedite matters, and applied for administration papers to the

property of the murdered Isadora. On the day that he made application a detective accosted Davis, and placing his hand upon his shoulder, said:

“Davis, I have a warrant for your arrest on the charge of murdering Katie Davis and [Isadora] Rio.”

Davis treated the matter coolly, and walked quietly before committing magistrate. When the judge had finished the charge, Counselor Varville arose and said:

“Your honor, the charges will be fully substantiated. Besides, I will add,” he continued, “I drew up for the murdered Isadora Rio a will five weeks after the one on which this man claims right to the estate. At the proper time this, also, will be substantiated.”

On the day preceding the occurrence of the facts just narrated, Mercita, the trusted maid of the dead Isadora, received a letter from Cienfuegos, written by Lopez Soares, the former associate of Davis. It stated that, believing he was about to die from injuries received in a drunken brawl, he wished to state some facts regarding a crime which he partly abetted.

After he and Davis had opened their gambling den, he discovered that Davis was accustomed to brutally beat his wife. One evening the three took a sail, Davis, supposing Soares to be asleep, struck his wife insensible to the deck, and in an instant had lifted the body and tossed it into the sea from the stern. A great wave grasped it, and it was seen no more. Soares glided from under the tarpaulin where he had been lying, and reached his bunk unseen. Presently Davis approached, and with apparent excitement stated that his wife had been washed overboard.

When Davis had succeeded in having himself made one of the executors of the will, he, at the moment, determined to rid himself of both sisters, and he selected Soares to assist him, allotting to him the part of abducting Angelique. When Angelique was attacked on the night of the murder she resisted so desperately that her assailant, fearing detection, abandoned his job and fled to Cienfuegos. The handkerchief, scarf, pistol, and gaiters belonging to Angelique were placed in their different positions by Davis, in order that no link in the chain of circumstantial evidence might be wanting whereby Angelique might escape conviction as being the murderer.

At the trial the evidence would be such as to convict her, and as a consequence he would fall into possession of the vast estates. His part of the bloody work was to make away with Isadora, and well he succeeded. With such facts as these in evidence, Davis' trial a few months ago was a short duration, and upon a verdict of guilty being rendered, he was sentenced for life to the quicksilver mines of Alameda, in Spain. In those mines every breath inhaled is poisonous. Eating ulcers, that bleed and fester, fasten upon the unfortunate's flesh; eruptions and malignant sores cover the body. The hair falls out; the jaws rot; the bones crumble, and the skin turns green. Here Davis was conveyed, a just retribution for his past heinous crimes. Angelique, recovering from her sickness, was immediately liberated, and at once took possession of her just rights, in company with her faithful maid, Mercita.

The Long Islander [Huntington NY], September 15, 1882

The Abbeville Press and Banner [Abbeville SC], September 27, 1882