

## Poetry.

## AGE.

There's a chastened spirit that folds its wings,  
Musing between earth and holy things;  
Still gliding on in its noiseless flight,  
Like the snow thro' the clouds of a winter's night.  
'Tis the spirit of age.

There's a passionless eye, that looks above,  
With a ray of faith, and a tear of love.  
That regards the stars, as they nightly glow.  
As the home of some friend who was once below.  
'Tis the eye of age.

There's a faded lip, that but faintly smiles,  
And with tales of bygone years beguiles  
The laughing child; and with holy kiss  
Mingles a prayer for its future bliss.  
'Tis the lip of age.

There's a withered hand, that in youth was wed  
To its kindred hand—but that hand is dead;  
And the withered hand, tho' it gave and lend,  
Now wants the aid of some kindly friend.  
'Tis the hand of age.

But the chastened spirit, which folds its wings,  
Will take its flight anon where the seraph sings,  
And the passionless eye, with its tear of love,  
Will behold all its lost in the realms above.  
Then farewell, age!

## Literary Selections.

## THE RIVALS;

## A STORY OF TEXAN BORDER LIFE.

(Continued)

About four months after this affair, in company with an adventurous friend I was traversing Western Texas. Our object was to see the country, and amuse ourselves in hunting for a time over any district we found adapted for a particular sport. We were in the county of Shelby, and one day we had all turned out for a deer drive. We divided in the morning; at supper time, at night, all had returned except my friend Henry, and a man named Storer, one of the neighbors who had joined our hunt. The meal was nearly over when Henry came bustling into the room, and with a slightly flurried manner, addressed our host:—

"Squire, this is a strange country of yours! Do you let crazy people range it with guns in their hands?"

"Not when we know it. Why? What about crazy people? You look excited."

"Well, I think I've had enough to make me feel curious."

"What is it? what is it?" exclaimed everybody eagerly.

"Why, I have either met the Old Harry himself, a ghost, or a madman, and which it is I am confoundedly puzzled to tell."

"Where? how?"

He threw himself into a chair, and wiping the perspiration from his forehead, went on to describe how, parting from Storer about noon, he got lost, upon a trail which he followed for a long time without discovering any traces of the right path, when the violent shying of his horse caused him to raise his eyes. The sight was enough to have "stampeded" a whole regiment of horse! On the left of the trail stood a very tall skeleton-like figure, dressed in skins one foot advanced, as if in the act of stepping across it, and a long heavy gun, just swinging down to the level, bearing on Henry! "Of course," said Henry, continuing his story, "my heart leaped into my throat, and my flesh shrank and crept. Before I could think of raising my gun, my eyes met those of the strange figure; and such eyes! Surprise at their cold, unnatural expression, suspended my action; burning with a chill, singular brilliancy, in deep sunken sockets, they looked as if they never had winked. Dwelling steadily upon my face for a moment, they seemed to be satisfied, and the gun was slowly thrown back upon his shoulder; and, plucking at a long beard with an impatient gesture of his bony hands, the figure made a stride across the trail, and, without speaking a word, plunged into the thicket. I pushed on, following the trail, when a horse with a saddle on burst from the woods behind me and tore off across the prairie, as if he, too, had seen the madman or fiend."

"What color was he?" exclaimed half-a-dozen voices in a breath.

"He was too far off for me to distinguish

more than that he was a dark horse, say, about as much so as mine. I could distinguish the pommel of the saddle and the stirrups flying."

"Storer's horse was a dark bay," was puzzled around the table in low tones, every one looking seriously in his neighbor's face.

"Yes," said the squire, rising and stepping uneasily to the window. "Storer's horse was a good deal like yours; he must have got away from him, and that is what detained him.—But then the nag was a very kind creature, and well trained. I wonder it should have behaved so!"

"Don't believe bay would have done it squire, said one of the men. "Something's gone wrong I think."

Several of the company recollected having head the report of a rifle, and it was about settled that Storer was in pursuit of game, when a horse's feet were heard galloping up to the door, and a loud "Hilloa!" followed. The Squire rose hastily and went out. In a few moments after he entered, looking pale and excited.

"Tom Dix, (one of Storer's neighbors) says that his horse has come home without a rider, the reins upon its neck, and a clot of blood upon the pommel of the saddle! Boys, he's been shot! Just as I expected from the first."

Everybody arose at this announcement, looking in the face of him opposite with a blank palid stare.

"The crazy man," said several.

"Strange!—Very mysterious!" said others.

"I'll tell you what," said the squire after a pause. "has struck me from the first. It is that this strange-looking fellow Henry saw mistook him for Storer, until he looked into his face—for Henry's horse and general appearance were not unlike his—and when he found that he was wrong, got out of the way and went on until he met Storer himself, and has shot him!"

"How strange!"

"This cannot be!"

"Monstrous!"

"Let us search immediately!"

"Where are the Regulators?"

"It was finally deemed mere folly to pursue the matter that night, and the squire sent off a messenger, summoning Hinch and the Regulators to be on the ground at early morn."

Before sunrise in the morning Hinch arrived with six men. I was waked by his loud blustering and swearing. He was raving as I afterwards understood about Henry, calling his story about meeting with the remarkable personage all humbug, and asserting a belief that if a murder had been committed, Henry was its author. Our host quieted him in some way and when he came out to join them he greeted us with a sort of snarling civility. Our search was for several hours entirely unsuccessful, until Henry, by accident, found the place where he had encountered the Bearded Ghost, as some one had christened him. Here one of the keen-eyed hunters found the traces of a large moccasined foot. These were pursued for several miles and lost. But, on spreading our line and continuing our course for some distance further, we at last found, indeed, the body of Storer! It had been so much mutilated by the wolves and ravens that little examination was made of the bones. We gathered them together to carry them home to his family, and in doing this I noticed a fracture in the back of the skull. It had had been stripped bare of flesh, and both eyes plucked out by the birds, and was too shocking an object for close examination. But what puzzled all parties most was the discovery, a short distance off, of the trail of a shod horse. Now, there was, perhaps, not a horse in Shelby county that wore shoes, and certainly not one in our party. Shoeing was never thought of, being unnecessary where there are no stones. This was as perfect a poser as even Henry's story, and threw a greater air of inexplicability over the affair! It was thought that this might be easily traced to any distance, but after worrying about it for several days, it was given up in despair, and the Regulators, fatigued and disheartened, scattered for their respective homes.

But one of their number never reached his. Being missed for two days, there was a general

turn-out to look for him, and as had been the case with Storer, his body was found torn to pieces by the wolves. The report was, that he, too, had been shot through the back of the head.

These murders, and the singular circumstances accompanying them, created a great sensation. Hinch and his troops scoured the country in every direction, arresting and lynching suspicious persons, as they called them. One poor inoffensive fellow they hung and cut down four or five times to make him confess, but nothing was elicited, and they left him with barely a spark of life.

That evening as they were returning to their head-quarters at the store, one of them, named Winter, missed a portion of his horse furniture, which had become accidentally detached. He said he had observed it in its place a mile back that he would get it and rejoin them at the store by the time they should be ready to commence the spree they had determined on going into that night. He left them, and never returned. They soon got drunk, and did not particularly notice his absence until some time the next day, when his family, alarmed by the return of his horse with an empty saddle, sent to enquire after him. This sort of inquiries had come to be so significant of late, that they were instantly sobered, and mounting, rode back on their trail. Very soon a swarm of buzzards and wolves, near a line of thicket ahead, designated the whereabouts of the object of their search, and there they found his fleshless bones scattered on every side. They were appalled! The reddest bloated cheek among them blanched! It was terrible!—They seemed to be doomed! Three of their number dead and torn to pieces within ten days, and yet not the slightest clue to the relentless and invisible foe! The excitement was universal and tremendous. Nearly the whole country turned out for the purpose of unravelling this alarming mystery; and the superstitious frenzy was in no small degree heightened by the report that this man had been shot in the same way as the others—in the back of the head!

## CHAPTER THIRD.

These incidents were all so unaccountable, that I own I felt no little sympathy with the popular association of a supernatural agency in their perpetration. Henry laughed at all this, but insisted that it was a maniac. The wildest and most absurd and incredible stories were now afloat among the people concerning this deadly and subtle foe of the Regulators, for it was now universally believed and remarked that it was against them alone that his enmity was directed. These stories were carried so far as to arouse in the cunning mind of Hinch the same suspicion which had occurred to Henry and myself, namely, that all this was the result of a profoundly acute and thoroughly organized scheme of the inhabitants headed by some man of peculiar personalities and consummate skill, with the object of exterminating off the Regulators. It seemed impossible that, without collusion with many others, the murderer should have been able to so baffle all pursuit. Hinch and his band had been thoroughly cowed and awed; but, the moment this idea occurred to them, the reaction of their base fears was savage exultation. Here was something tangible; their open and united force could easily exterminate an enemy who had acknowledged their weakness in resorting to secret combination and assassination from "the bush!" They forthwith proclaimed "war to the knife" with the whole class; and during the next week several outrages, so revolting that I will not detail them, were perpetrated on these men in different parts of the country; and the fact that, during this general tumult nothing more was seen or heard of the mysterious rifleman, encouraged them in the belief that they had succeeded in getting rid of him through the intimidation of his confederates.

They had now been for nearly a fortnight in the saddle, had glutted themselves with vengeance, and as they conceived, broken down this dangerous conspiracy against their power; and if they had not succeeded in detecting and punishing, had at least frightened off their sin-

gular foe. They now concluded they might safely disband. That day after they separated, one of them, of the name of Rees—almost as bad and savage a man as Hinch himself, was riding past a thicket, in sight of his own house, when he was shot from it. His negroes heard the gun, and seeing his horse galloping up to the house, riderless, and snorting wildly, they ran down and found him stretched in the road, dead. *He was shot in the eye*, and the ball had passed out at the back of his head!

When Hinch heard this he turned perfectly livid, his knees smote together, and with a horrible oath he exclaimed, "It's Jack Long, come back for vengeance!" It was now perceived for the first time that all the men had been shot through the eye, instead of the back of the head, where the ball had only passed out after entering at the socket. The other heads had been too unpleasantly mutilated for examination, and this fact had not been before observed. Of course everybody was satisfied now that this terrible being was in one way or other identified with Jack Long; for the notoriety of his favorite mark, and his matchless skill instantly occurring to all, as accounting for much that was unaccountable in these occurrences. This produced a great change in the public feeling. The better sort began to conceive that they understood the whole matter. The lynching Jack had received was fresh in their memories, and they supposed that its severity had shaken his mental balance and made him a mono-maniac, and that the disease had endowed him with the marvelous cunning, the staunch, murderous hate, and the unnatural appearance which had created such a sensation. They could not understand how a being so simple-hearted and sluggish as he was reported to have been, could have been roused or stung to such deeds by the mere depth and power of his natural passions.—But, mono-maniac or not, such a vengeance, and the daring conduct of the whole affair, were imposing to their associations and prepossessions, and they sympathized heartily with him. It was only while the general uncertainty left every man in doubt whether his own person might not be the next object of murderous aim, that the public were disposed to back the Rangers in whatever violent measures they might choose to resort to, to drag the secret to light and the actor to punishment; but now that it was apparent that his whole hate was directed against the Rangers, and all that uncertainty was confined to them, be he devil, ghost, madman, or Jack Long, the public had no intention of interfering again.—It was a personal issue between him and them—they might settle it between themselves!—Indeed, men felt in their inmost hearts that every man of the ten engaged in lynching Jack Long deserved a dozen times over to be shot; and now they looked on coldly, rather enjoying the thing, and earnestly hoping that Jack might have the best of it.

And of this there seemed to be a strong probability; for the Regulators only made one more attempt to get together; but, another of their number being killed on his way to the rendezvous, his body bearing that well-known and fearful signature of skill, the remaining five perfectly unnerved and overcome with terror, retreated to their houses, and scarcely dared for several weeks to put their heads outside their own doors.

The class to which Jack belonged, at least those of them who had managed to keep a footing during the relentless proscription of the Regulators, now began to look up, and hinted that they had known of Jack's return from the time of Storer's murder, and had aided and abetted his purposes in every way in their power; furnishing him with fresh horses when the noble animal he rode back from the States became fatigued; assisting his flights and concealments, and furnishing him with information, as well as spreading the exaggerated stories about him. One bluff old fellow remarked:—

"You are fools to talk about Jack's being crazy. He's as calm and as cool as a frost morning in old Kentucky, and his head is as clear as a bell; he's just got his Indian-fighting and Tory-hatin' blood waked up in him by them stripes! That's a blood that's more