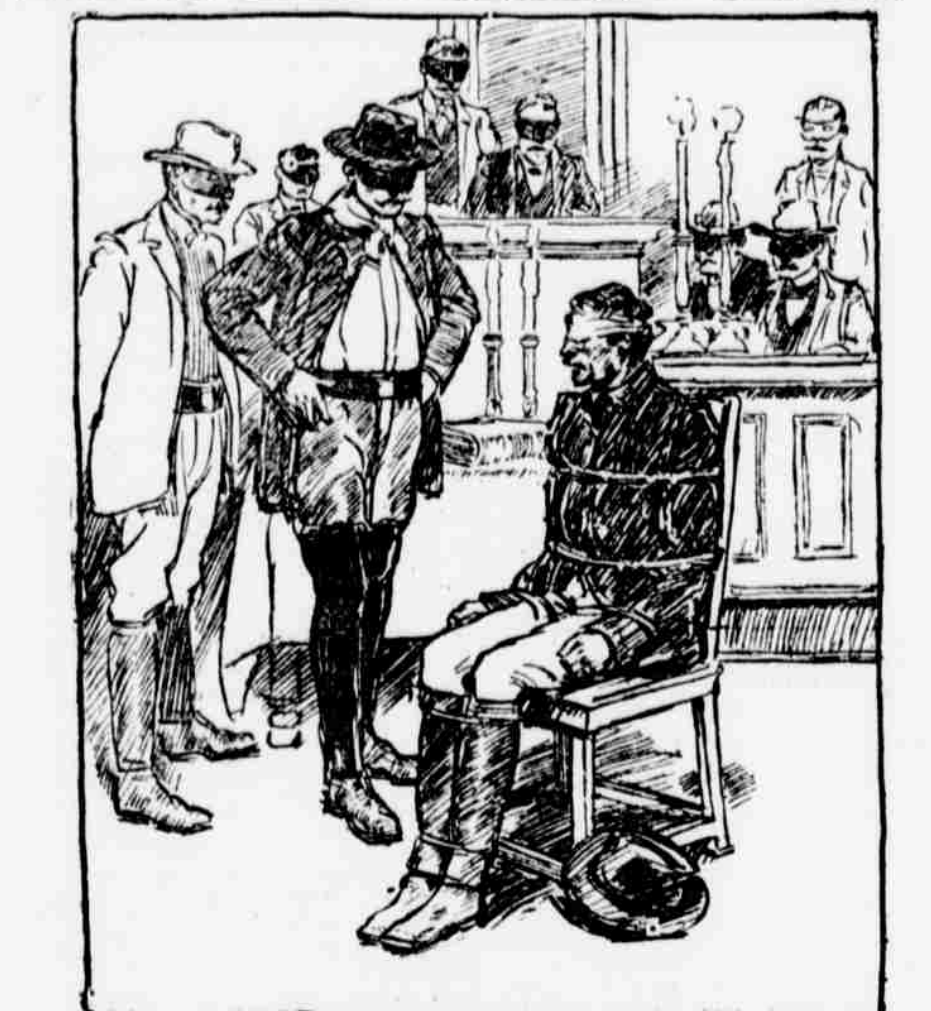


A MIDNIGHT RIDE.

By FREDERIC VAN RENSSELAER DEY.

(Copyright, 1900, by S. R. McClure & Co.) I called upon Marston Moore one evening—it was in September, 1888—and quite to my surprise found him in deep dejection. He was a young physician of three or four years' practice, but without a care in the world that I had ever heard of, certainly he had no occasion to worry about ordinary things, for his bank account was among the many thousands. Nevertheless he was despondent and when I endeavored to laugh him out of the condition he became only more morose. His manner was so brusque and his replies so monosyllabic that at last I took offense and rose to depart. It was then that he detained me.

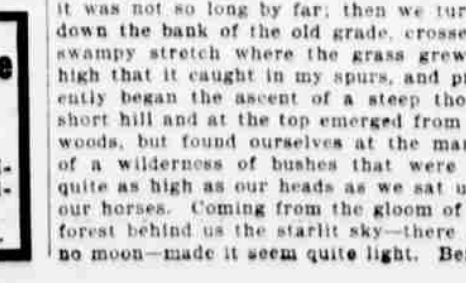
about the affair, for I could not even guess at the meaning of his strange words and manner. I had known Moore since my freshman year at college, and our friendship had never faltered since that time, now twelve years, nor had I ever known him to get into a serious scrape. Of the two, I was more prone to that sort of thing. It was barely 8 o'clock when I left Moore, so that I had four hours in which to make my preparations for the midnight ride. This I did, first by writing several letters and enclosing them in a big envelope, which I placed conspicuously on the mantel in my sleeping room, marked "To be opened and directions followed in case I have not returned at 8 o'clock tomorrow evening." Then I dated it, so there might be no mistake. After that I clothed myself in my riding suit and boots, buckled my cartridge belt and revolver around my body and I was ready.



EVERY RUSE WHICH THE HUMAN MIND COULD CONCEIVE WAS FORCED TO INDUCE ME TO DESERT MOORE.

should consider any test of my friendship for him too great for me to stand. "If there is anything in the world that I can do for you, Marston, you will know that I will be only too glad to do it. Out with it now, what is the matter?" "I cannot tell you all of the horrible story," he replied with marked hesitation. "If you are willing to go with me you will have to wait until we arrive before you hear all there is to tell."

"No, you said 'exactly at 12' those are your own words." "Well, never mind; you are here now, saddle, struck his horse a smart clip with the whip and dashed into the darkness. I was after him on the instant, but did not overtake him until we were at Fifteenth street, where he held up and waited for me. "We turn here," he said briefly, and led the way along that thoroughfare towards the Blue river valley. I endeavored to get near enough to converse with him, but for some reason I could not succeed. Either his horse was unusually fractious, or surreptitiously Moore kept him excited with the spur. All the way to the river bottom he kept a little ahead of me, and quite to one side, so that there was no opportunity for conversation. Down at the very point where Fifteenth street crosses the bottom he halted and for the first time seemed disposed to talk.



...LL BE BLOWED IF YOU WILL."

us, 200 or 300 feet away, dark, gloomy and forbidding, loomed the outlines of a house, and for some reason the aspect of the whole thing sent an involuntary shudder through me. While I was intently regarding the house Moore dismounted and, having unbuckled one side of the bridle rein and thus made a halter of it, he tied his horse to a tree. "We will have to leave the horses here, Ferguson," he said. "What we have to do now must be done on foot. The your animal and follow me."

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